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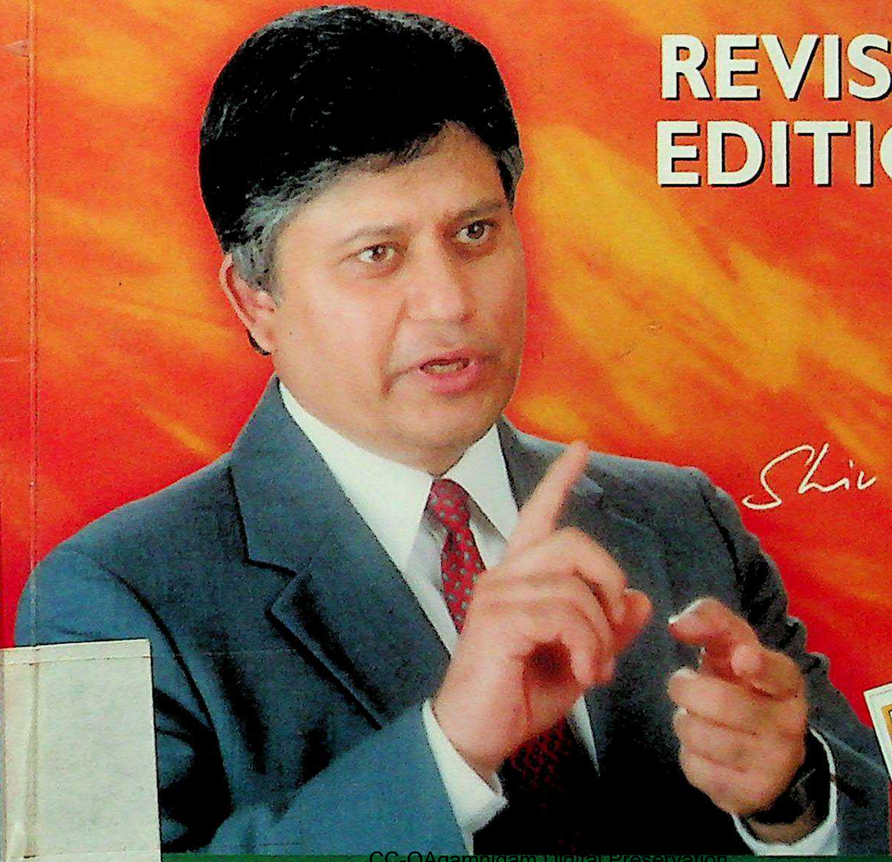
FREEDOM IS NOT FREE

EVERY GENERATION NEEDS TO EARN ITS OWN FREEDOM

REVISED EDITION



Shiv Khera

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Winners don't do different things
They do things differently™

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"It is never the
ACTIVITY OF RASCALS
that destroys a society,
but always the
INACTIVITY of the
GOOD PEOPLE."

OPPORTUNISTS say,
"Whatever LITTLE BIT
I can do, I will do"
CONCERNED citizens say,
"Whatever it takes to do for
the Nation, I will do."

"IF INJUSTICE is happening to
your neighbour and you can SLEEP,
WAIT for your turn.
You are NEXT."

"There is a cost of standing up
on your feet and there is a
cost of living on your knees.
Guess what's more expensive!"

"Citizens who value their
PRIVILEGES over principles,
end up LOSING both."

"A society is in DANGER when
those who have never learnt
to OBEY are given the right
to COMMAND."

"WEAK people can never
be SINCERE –
COWARDS can never
practice MORALITY."

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Dedication

You and I are free today because somebody is guarding our frontiers.

This book is dedicated to all the freedom fighters and soldiers of India who made the ultimate sacrifice, freed us from slavery and taught us that FREEDOM IS NOT FREE.

Every generation needs to earn its own freedom.

"Mission accomplished, Sir!" were this real-life hero's last words.

It was a Friday. The second day of January 2004. The nation was still recovering from New Year celebrations. A young army Lieutenant was the real-life hero at the Jammu railway station as he gunned down militants in a virtual one-to-one battle before losing his life.

Lt. Triveni Singh was waiting for a train on Friday night, when the terrorists struck.

He found that the militants had taken position on an overbridge linking platforms one and two and were firing at the station teeming with pilgrims on their way back from the Vaishno Devi shrine.

Lt. Singh rushed, to come within close range of the terrorists. He faced indiscriminate firing and lobbing of grenades by the militants but succeeded in killing one of them. The second terrorist, threw

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a grenade while trying to escape, but the seriously injured officer stood up and shot him dead.

"Mission accomplished, Sir!" Lt. Singh said and saluted his General Officer-Commanding before he died.

Mission accomplished, but life shattered at home in Pathankot, where his father, Capt. Janmej Singh (retd.) and his mother were busy planning their son's wedding, due in March 2004.

God bless those parents who bring forth such brave sons to serve the motherland. If such sacrifices made by patriots do not propel citizens into action, then those citizens should be labelled 'parasites' and 'traitors'. Their citizenship ought to be forfeited.

Jai Hind!

Next time, when you meet a soldier, just say "Thank you".

(Adapted from newspapers and online articles)

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Preface

One day, a rich man took his young son on a trip to the country with the express purpose of showing him how poor people live. They spent a day and a night on the farm of a very poor family. When they returned from their trip, the father asked his son, "How was the trip?"

"Very good, Dad!"

"Did you see how poor people live?" the father asked.

"Yeah!"

"And what did you learn?"

The son answered, "I saw that we have one dog at home, and they have four. We have a pool that reaches the middle of the garden, while they have a creek that has no end. We have imported lamps in the garden, they have the stars. Our patio reaches only till the front yard and they have a whole horizon."

Upon hearing what the little boy said, his father was left speechless.

The above story came to me from an NRI in the United Kingdom, and it strives to make a point. I appreciate the little boy's 'innocent optimism', but I must hasten to add that though the NRI did see it he failed to recognise what he saw. No matter how we look at it, there is a big difference between a condition and its perception. A condition remains just that – a condition, until it is changed. Poverty

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and hunger are conditions. No matter how we perceive the stars and the creeks, it still does not help feed a hungry stomach and does not save the life of a child who is dying because he can't afford the medicine.

As a concerned citizen, we need to ask – has our conscience gone to sleep or is it dead? If it has gone to sleep, this book is a wake-up call and there is hope; but, if it is dead, then we are heading for self-destruction. It is a call to action. It is a challenge that will put us on the path to prosperity. I encourage every Indian to take the initiative in bringing glory to India.

Concerned citizens empower themselves to decide their own future and that of the nation. This life is not a dress rehearsal and the stakes are too high. There are no ideal conditions and there never shall be. This is about here and now. Anyone who has ever achieved anything in life, must has been tested with fire. Winners achieve success despite problems, not in their absence.

All it takes to change the course of history is a small group of genuinely interested citizens.

> *I am more afraid of an army of one hundred sheep led by a lion than an army of one hundred lions led by a sheep.*
>
> – Charles Maurice

Is our society ready to be guided by a leader, who will accept the challenge to honestly lead principled citizens to dignity and prosperity? You can be that leader! Don't turn around and look for a leader in another person. He's looking up to you, for leadership! Take control of your own destiny!

THIS IS YOUR MOMENT!

This book is not just a compilation of data. The objective is not to generate any sympathy, but to generate empathy which propels a person into action. This book is not for everyone. It is for those who not only have the character, but also the courage to take a stand for a cause.

THIS BOOK IS A MOVEMENT.

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Acknowledgements

Any accomplishment requires the effort of many people and this work is no different. I thank my daughters and son-in-law, and especially my wife, whose patience and support have been instrumental in accomplishing this task. I thank my staff for their diligent effort, which made this publication possible.

Many examples, stories and anecdotes are the result of a collection from various sources, such as newspapers, magazines, other speakers and seminar participants, over the last 25 years. Unfortunately, the sources were not always noted or available; hence, it became impractical to provide an accurate acknowledgement. Regardless of the source, I wish to express my gratitude to those who may have contributed to this work, even anonymously.

Every effort has been made to give credit where it is due for the material contained herein. If we have inadvertently missed out acknowledging our contributors, future publications will give due credit to those who are brought to the author's attention.

The examples in this book are real. They are not isolated cases. The state of affairs and the level of degradation has reached such epidemic proportions that in India today, a person without money or contacts, lives a life worse than a slave.

The word 'politician' is being used with reference to those politicians

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only, who are misusing their power, betraying the trust of the people and sacrificing national interest for personal gains.

TO A PATRIOT SERVING THE NATION IS NOT A SACRIFICE BUT A PRIVILEGE.

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1

Let's Pay It Forward

VISION INDIA

Close your eyes. Keep them closed for a minute. **Dare to dream.** Think of a wonderful future in which India is a beautiful place. We are a compassionate and caring society. We are the beacon of courage and integrity. We have eradicated the scourge of poverty. Power cuts and poor governmental services are a thing of the past. We lead the world in many areas of business and technology. The air is unpolluted and our sleep, undisturbed. We command respect across the world. We are a society, free from crime. People from all nations adhere to the example set by our Nation and want to live in India.

We can achieve all of this and more, as other countries have done before us! And why not? We have all the ingredients to create a recipe for success – talented people, natural resources, a functioning democracy and an appetite for growth and development. However, have we arrived? Not yet!

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Have you ever wondered, why some societies are more conducive to honest and progressive living than others? It is not a secret. They simply think and act more effectively. They create a climate that rewards honesty and hard work.

Just like a road map's purpose is to give direction and help people travel with confidence, similarly, history gives information on civilisations that were once flourishing, but gradually went into oblivion. **The ones that survived were those that stood firm on the pillars of values and institutions. This goes to prove that flexibility stops when it starts encroaching on values. Political structures are far shorter-lived than moral structures.**

A great management consultant once said, **"Any behaviour that gets rewarded, gets repeated."** This is a universal principle. It cuts across countries, religions and cultures. It is demonstrated in our homes, offices and societies. When you reward positive behaviour, it gets repeated, but when you reward negative behaviour, then that gets repeated too.

Values are principles that guide our actions. Positive values, such as integrity, fairness and empathy, result in positive behaviour and build a positive society. This in turn, is conducive to honest living, growth and development. Negative values such as cheating, dishonesty, greed and inferiority complex result in negative behaviour, generating a negative society, which becomes conducive to dishonest living.

Commonly-practised individual behaviours collectively form a societal culture which in turn, gets labelled as either positive or negative. Such behaviour patterns are reflected in the quality of life that people lead. Positive culture is reflected as an asset on the balance sheet of society.

Every nation and society carry a brand equity.

James Collins and Jerry Porras, authors of the best-selling book,

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Built to Last conducted a study of companies that in their opinion were "visionary companies". They found some common characteristics in all these companies:

1. They had clearly-defined core values.
2. They communicated their core values.
3. They did not deviate from their core values.
4. They never compromised on their core values.
5. All the companies' practices and procedures were totally linked to their core values.

What stops a country from running on the same lines as above? There are countries that are run on core values! The American Constitution, in the last 250 years or so has been amended close to 10 times, versus the Indian Constitution that has had close to 100 amendments in the last 50 years.

A farmer was spraying insecticides in his apple orchard. A passerby said, "The way you are spraying insecticides, you really must have something against the insects." The farmer replied, "No, I'm not against the insects but I am certainly for the apples." He added further, "I don't go around spraying insecticides all over the world. I only spray on the ones that eat my apples."

Is there a message in this story? You bet there is!

If I am not for myself, then who is? And if I am only for myself, then what am I?

The message is very clear. If, as a citizen, I am not concerned and willing to stand up for my country, then who will?

Each one of us, by virtue of being born in this country, took an unwritten oath to build and uphold the integrity of the nation. The question is – are we doing so?

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Our Youth Need Roots to Grow and Wings to Fly

Values are our roots. Success, our wings. The combination of both factors means achieving value-based success in life. This is true liberty. This is FREEDOM.

No price is too high to ensure that the torch of liberty must continue to burn forever and ever and ever. Every generation needs to resolve afresh to nurture the plant of freedom and enjoy the rich harvest for themselves and the coming generation.

Our youth does not form 100 per cent of the Nation's population, but they are in fact 100 per cent of its future.

Youth is the symbol of dynamism, growth and development. The real agents of change are not political or corporate leaders, but the youth. Whenever the words 'youth' and 'dynamism' are mentioned, our minds are drawn to Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Vivekananda was a patriotic saint. Once, while addressing a large audience, he repeatedly referred to India as, "My country ... my motherland." Someone from the audience asked him, "The whole world is your country. Why do you limit yourself to geographical boundaries?" Swami Vivekananda replied, "A country is like a mother. If you don't respect your own mother, how will you respect someone else's mother?"

SERVING THE NATION IS NOT A SACRIFICE, BUT A PRIVILEGE

The sad part is, in India today it is difficult to find an Indian.

Where is the Indian? You find a Gujarati, a Marathi, a Bengali, a Punjabi, but *where is the Indian?* I have sometimes, been asked by people, what's wrong in being Gujarati, Punjabi, Bengali or Madrasee? My answer is, if it is at the cost of the nation, it is

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wrong. Is it a case of confused identities or misplaced priorities? We have to be Indian first, before we are anything else.

Feelings of regionalism, communalism, casteism and the absence of a strong national sentiment plague the nation and make it possible for power-hungry politicians to convert our democracy into anarchy. Merit has taken a back-seat to vested interests.

Non-Resident Indians' Achievements

"Two hundred thousand Americans of Indian origin were reported to have become millionaires in the year 2001. This is approximately 10 per cent of the total number of millionaires in the US, making Indians the most prosperous immigrant community in America. The median income for an Indian is twice the $ 38,000 income of an average American."[1]

"The Asian American Hotels Owner's Association (AAHOA), represents more than 8,500 members representing over 50 per cent of the economy's lodging properties and nearly 37 per cent of all hotel properties in the United States."[2]

"Indians abroad are doing us proud. They may account for just 2 per cent of India's population, but their annual income of $ 160 billion (Rs 7, 84,000 crore) is one-third of India's national income. They are in senior positions in any big company that you name... *Being French in France is easy. But being Indian in India is difficult.*"[3]

What does this go to show?

It proves that most NRIs are doing well. Why? The answer lies in one's surroundings. In a good environment, a marginal performer does well, whereas a good performer excels. The reverse is also

[1] *The Economic Times*, 16 May 2003.
[2] *Global Indian Community*, 9 January 2004.
[3] Vikas Thapar, an NRI venture capitalist, quoted in *India Today*, 13 January 2003.

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true. In a bad environment, a good performer's output comes down.

Every patriotic Indian agrees that if there is one factor that keeps India from taking off as a global player, it is corruption. What is it that keeps India perpetually poor and makes life miserable for the common citizen? IT IS CORRUPTION.

Jobs for sale. Education for sale. Even caste certificates are on sale. A citizen contends with corruption at almost every level in public life, whether he needs to procure a birth certificate or a death certificate.

We have been rated the seventh most-corrupt country in the world by Transparency International, an organisation that rates the levels of corruption in countries across the world.

How did we land ourselves in this mess? What does it really mean? What will be the repercussions?

We know that corruption is widespread and that it feeds on and breeds negativity, immorality and imbalance in our society. It must be stopped. Our newspapers report scams and scandals on a daily basis. It is an endless chain of depressing stories. And these are just the ones that have seen the light of the day. There are still many others that have been brushed under the carpet for posterity.

Whether it is the Telgi stamp paper scam, the CAT scam, the Dubey murder, or the all-pervasive mindset of bribery and facilitation that we face in our own daily lives, corruption is a cancer that has struck our nation. The only time that we, honourable citizens, ever raise an eyebrow is when we become victims.

India, in spite of having more natural resources than Singapore, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, etc., remains economically far behind these countries. India probably has the highest pool of talent in the English-speaking world after the United States, which means that we have great potential

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to be one of the great superpowers. However, the success of a nation does not depend upon its potential alone, but the quality of its people and their actual performance.

Academic institutions have built a great pool of talent within India which is awaiting utilisation by domestic and international corporates to take India to new heights.

We are one of the youngest nations in the world, with 54 per cent of our population below the age of 25 years and approximately 70 per cent below the age of 35 years. What does it mean? We are in a position to fill in the gap for the shortfall of qualified human resources, globally. This happened not by design, but by default because our population control measures have failed miserably. Regardless of how it happened, the question is – can we turn our human resources into our greatest asset and become global leaders?

Mankind has the unique capacity to visualise circumstances, tackle situations, adapt to their environment and shape it too. Changing dysfunctional behaviour is difficult, but not impossible. Any change, by itself, is uncomfortable. What makes it difficult? The fear of the unknown. Therefore, people prefer to live with a known misery than to venture into an unknown progress. The real danger, however, lies in evil becoming deep-rooted.

In the life of a nation, fifty years is not a very long period, but it is long enough in order to introspect and evaluate our past performance, and most importantly to evaluate the direction we are heading towards.

Money today has become the sole measure of success. We live in a dog-eat-dog world, where we are selfishly occupied with our own selves. Do we care about our culture and nation anymore? Aren't we leaving behind a poor legacy?

These verses written by the poet Iqbal who died on 21 April 1938 issued a timely warning: to the ignorant or indifferent who

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don't realise the danger lurking at the horizon. If the citizens do not realise the intensity of the danger, you and your country's existence would be wiped out forever.

Vatan ki fikar kar nadan,
Musibat aane wali hai,
Teri barbadiyon ke mashware hain
Aasmano mein.
Na samjhoge to mit jaoge,
Aei Hindustan walo,
Tumhari dastan taq bhi
Na hogi dastano mein.

An ostrich-like approach to life is, "If you cannot see danger, it means that danger does not exist." Some people think that the only way to find one's peace of mind is to ignore the danger.

Today, in India, a concerned citizen feels helpless and lost. He doesn't know where to start. He wants to do something, but doesn't know what. He needs direction and finds none. He is angry, yet scared.

An honest person has a real problem. He is not confused but frustrated. He can neither be a part of the system, nor be apart from the system.

Hope and trust are what empower us to take calculated risks which are so essential for the development of a society. Without a strong civil society, political and economic structures would fail. Business cannot thrive when there is no trust between producers and consumers, employers and employees. Families and communities fall apart or break up because of a lack of support from one another. Neighbourhoods fail because of the lack of fellow feeling. Civil societies rest on moral relationships and mutual respect.

Our people have been deprived of their basic constitutional and fundamental rights such as the rights to freedom and equality. They

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feel helpless when faced with inadequate judicial recourse. Have the common man's dreams turned into nightmares or been realised? Is this India's tryst with destiny that was proclaimed with much fanfare, fifty years ago?

According to Prof. Balraj Madhok, "Secularism as accepted and practised all over the world has three basic postulates:

1. The state shall not distinguish between citizens on the basis of religion or the way of worship;
2. All citizens will be governed by the same laws;
3. All citizens will be equal before law.

India is not a secular state today because we do not fulfil any of these three postulates."

Do the following qualify under the definition of secularism?

- Reservations based on caste and religion,
- Not having an uniform civil code,
- Restriction on citizens buying property freely in states other than their home states.

Why shouldn't we have a uniform law for all citizens, like the countries in the West?

In a democracy, legislators are supposed to be representatives of citizens and not the rulers. Any state, where an honest citizen is scared of his own government officials, the police and the judicial system, is known as a terrorist State. Doesn't that amount to tormenting their own citizens and turning them into subjects? Is this not breach of trust?

WHO WILL BELL THE CAT?

An old story goes: a cat was hunting down all the mice in a house. The mice, therefore, called a meeting to find a way out

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of the crisis. They decided to seek the help of a consultant. The consultant advised, "It is actually quite simple. Just tie a bell around the cat's neck, so that you will be warned of her moves." He took his fees and was about to leave, when a small mouse squeaked, "Who is going to bell the cat?" The consultant said, "My job is to suggest a solution to your problem – how you go about implementing it, is your concern."

The little mouse thought hard. The next day, he drugged the cat. When the cat was fast asleep, he secured the bell around the cat's neck.

The moral of the story is:

1. Advice and advisors are often easily available, but execution is difficult. All talkers are not doers.
2. One can achieve desired results if one can be solution-focussed, far-sighted and willing to translate his vision into action. This is called conviction. We must proceed with the assumption, that a solution exists. All that we have to do, is to find it.
3. The creativity and courage of one can save many.

One man discovers electricity and all of humanity benefits from it.

I heard of a great movie, directed by Mimi Leder, called *Pay it Forward,* in which a teacher gives a class a long-term assignment that would make a difference to the world. Some students helped the poor, some cleaned up roads, while others helped an elderly person cross the street. But there was one boy who had a very clear vision and created a concept, called "pay it forward" rather than backward. He decided to do somethings for three people who could not do those things for themselves, on a condition. The condition was that the help would be contingent upon each of them helping three other people who in turn would make the same commitment and so on going forward. This would create a snow-balling effect giving positive growth a geometric progression which

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would make the world a great place to live in. He had it right. What a concept! If each one of us could adopt this concept, this would certainly be a different world!

Does a person have to be a rocket-scientist to think this way or have a doctorate in any subject? What does this have to do with academics? If you analyse, the principles underlying this concept and thinking are:

1. Humanity – Humanity is greater than 'a' human.
2. Common good – The greatest good for the greatest number.
3. Positive values – Directed by a noble cause.
4. Desire to optimise charity – Create human capital, rather than parasites.
5. Create a positive society, each one lifting the other.
6. Regenerate society by creating positive social capital.
7. You turn a society from 'takers' into 'givers', without which the society starts degenerating. (The recipient can't be just a taker. He has an obligation to be a giver too.)

In 1979, I moved to New Jersey from Canada. I had a sales appointment in Newark, which is a high crime area. A major snowstorm was predicted on that day. Normally, people don't leave home, but foolishly, I ventured out. By the time I came out from my appointment, the storm had hit; my car was stuck in about six inches of snow. I don't know if you have ever been scared for your life, but that night I was. In the dark alleys, whenever I saw someone coming by, I would jump into my car, lock myself and duck down. When they left, I tried to get my car out, but without success. Suddenly, I saw a car coming in my direction. The street light fell on the car. I saw an elderly couple and thought that if there was one chance for me to get out, this was it. I ran towards them. As they saw me coming, guess what they did? They did not want to stop because they were just as scared, but in that much snow, you can't go too far. As I came close, the man

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opened the window half an inch and asked, "What's the matter?" I said, "Sir, my car is stuck. Would you sit inside and I'll push." He said, "No, you sit inside. I'll push your car with my car and we both will get out." He got me out alright, but he didn't want to stay there. I went back to thank him. He opened the window and asked again, "Now, what's the matter?" I said, "Sir, I want to thank you." He saw the sincerity in my eyes, looked at me and said, **"If you really mean that, then, just the way I stopped for you tonight, whenever you find somebody in trouble, you stop, and you will keep thanking me forever."** After he left, I started thinking about what he had said. It took time to register, but that incident taught me three lessons:

1. No matter how strong anyone of us is, we all need each other. None of us can do it alone.
2. It takes a big person to extend a helping hand.
3. There is nothing wrong in asking for help.

Since then most of the time whenever I have seen someone in distress, I have stopped.

When people thank me, guess what I say? **"If you really mean that, then, just the way I stopped for you tonight, whenever you find somebody in trouble, you stop, and you will keep thanking me forever."** When asked by people, "why do you stop?" My answer is simply that "I didn't stop because of you. I stopped because of my own selfish reasons. If I were in distress, wouldn't I expect someone to stop for me?" This kind of selfishness is healthy, even if it is labelled as 'selfishness'. The old gentleman, without realising, was practicing the concept of "Pay it Forward" and teaching others a way of life.

When and where do *we* start?

WHAT BETTER TIME THAN NOW?
WHAT BETTER PLACE THAN INDIA?

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2

Patriotism and Treachery

PATRIOTISM – OLD OR OBSOLETE?

Samuel Johnson said, "Patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel." Let us evaluate the statement. If Samuel Johnson's statement is to be taken as the literal truth, then George Washington, Churchill, Lincoln, Gandhi, Mandela and Lee Kwan Yew, have all been scoundrels! Facts prove otherwise. All these people were actually patriots and not opportunists. However, if scoundrels wear the cloak of patriotism, then that is nothing but hypocrisy – which anyway is not patriotism to begin with.

Some questions linked to patriotism, now arise:

- Is patriotism national pride or chauvinism?
- Is defence spending justified in a world that needs humanitarian services?

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National Pride

Citizens must realise that every product of a country that carries the label, "Made in . . ." also carries the respect and dignity of every citizen of that country. True pride in one's country is demonstrated by making the finest products to the best of one's abilities. Taking pride in one's own country, however, does not necessarily translate into the attitude, "My country is better than yours." That is a very narrow and distorted point of view. Patriotism that involves pulling down other nations, amounts to chauvinism and leads to conflict.

A major reason for the success of the Japanese is their patriotic feeling that translates from pride in the nation. Quality products and responsible behaviour signify patriotism in Japan, whereas, poor quality and irresponsible behaviour are considered unpatriotic. Case closed. Their management principles such as Kaizen and JIT (Just-In-Time) take root from the feeling that anything made in Japan carries the respect and dignity of every citizen.

In Singapore, I gave a taxi driver a business card to get me to a particular address. Since he did not know the building, he circled around the area and brought me to my destination. The meter read $ 11. I gave him $ 11, but he took only $ 10. I asked him, "Why are you taking $ 10 when your meter reads $ 11?" He answered, "Sir, I am a taxi driver. I am supposed to take you straight to your destination. Since I did not know the exact location of the building, I had to circle around the whole block. Had I brought you here straight, it would have cost you only $ 10. Why should you pay for my ignorance? Legally, I can claim $ 11, but ethically I am entitled to only $ 10."

He told me that a person who drives a taxi in Singapore, is not called a taxi driver. They are called the Diplomats of Singapore, but are without diplomatic passports. Every citizen is an ambassador of his nation. Approximately 8 million tourists visit

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Singapore every year. Having been cleared by the immigration and customs departments in any country, the first experience that a tourist has, is with a taxi driver. When a tourist visits a new place for a short span of two or three days, if his first experience with the taxi driver is not a good one, the balance of his stay is not pleasant either.

With the kind of attitude and pride in the nation that the Singaporeans have, is it a surprise that Singapore is progressing by leaps and bounds? Incidentally:

1. This behaviour has nothing to do with the size of the nation.
2. This is not an isolated incident. Most taxi drivers in Singapore take pride in their nation.

Unless we bring the same spirit into India, nothing will work. Isn't it time that every citizen felt that anything made in India, ought to carry the respect and dignity of every citizen?

National pride is reflected in every action, decision and behaviour of a citizen, whether inside or outside the country. This is reflected in not only how we treat each other within the country, but it also means that every Indian is an ambassador, whether he hosts a foreigner or is a guest overseas.

Pride in the country encompasses every area of your life – including sports.

This was clearly demonstrated at the World Cup Football 2002, when the South Koreans reached the semi-finals out of the blue. Eventually, they lost in the finals, but they won the hearts of the world in the way they played the game, didn't they?

But look at another team, the erstwhile World Cup Football champions, the French! These guys had the greatest track record, but they were knocked out in the first round itself. When they lost the match, one of the players said, "There goes my contract." *This is what he had to say – "There goes my contract!" See*

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the difference? One team was playing for the pride of the nation and the other for the contract. They were both playing totally different ball games. One team was playing to win, out of *inspiration*. The other was playing not to lose, out of *desperation*.

In a nation of a billion people, we do have an occasional, exceptional sportsman, but why can't we produce world-class sportsmen in proportion to our population? Is it that corruption has seeped in so deep into the system that the right people don't even get a chance?

People argue that billions of dollars are spent on armies in the name of national pride or patriotism. This is money, which could have been better used for humanitarian purposes – a great ideal to strive for! But so long as there are terrorists and Hitlers in this world, threatening the respect and dignity of other nations and oppressing humanity, there will always be a need for armies to defend the honour of peace-loving nations. No wonder our armies are called defence forces and not offence forces. Tyrants like Hitler, however, use them for aggression. Would any self-respecting nation greet aggressors like Hitler with bouquets and flowers?

In today's concept of a global village, questions that arise are:

- Isn't patriotism outdated in the age of the global village? Are a nation's boundaries defined by barbed wires and steel gates?
- Do territorial boundaries have any sanctity?

Let us evaluate the questions raised above. The answer is that a nation does not only mean barbed wires and steel gates. Territorial boundaries, at the same time, definitely have great sanctity. It is for this very reason that you have a title deed to your house. A title deed to your house gives you the freedom of using or abusing your house. You have the privacy and freedom to do what you want, keeping in mind your obligations to society. A title deed does not entitle you to pollute the neighbourhood, which means that freedom is not a licence.

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Loving your country does not mean hating another's country.

Pseudo-patriotism is about pulling down another nation to prove your own superiority.

So long as we share this planet together, we remain connected. What you do, affects me and all that I do, affects you. This is why all-encompassing social responsibilities and human values must become the foundation of every country's agenda.

ASSETS OR LIABILITIES?

There are only two kinds of citizens in a country – **patriots** and **traitors**, who are assets and liabilities, respectively.

There are two kinds of patriots:

1. A seasonal patriot.
2. A true patriot.

Seasonal Patriots

This breed talks of the nation above self, but in practice, they put self above the nation. To a seasonal patriot, patriotism is a matter of convenience.

Opportunists say, "Whatever little bit I can do, I will do."

Seasonal patriots act because they either want to win favours or avoid punishments. They don't want to be labelled as traitors, yet their commitments are not strong enough for them to want to make a sacrifice. At the first sign of inconvenience or difficulty, their patriotism evaporates.

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True Patriots

Concerned citizens say, "Whatever the nation takes to do, that's what I will do."

If every soldier believed:

"I have a family."
"I have other obligations."
"I am only one person."

Would we have freedom?

Are those who sacrifice for the nation, orphans? Isn't every citizen a soldier without uniform?

Why is duty a forgotten word in today's culture? Duty is what we do out of gratitude to those who went before us and defended the liberties we enjoy today.

A soldier said, "When you go home, tell them 'for your tomorrow, we gave our today'."

Isn't it interesting that a *traitor* for selfish reasons has no limits? He can go to any extent. Well, look at the other side – a true *patriot* or a soldier of the nation, also has no limits. He can go to any length.

PILLAR OF BRAVERY

Rani Lakshmi Bai, the Queen of Jhansi was a brave warrior who took on the British and refused to obey their orders that went against her kingdom. In 1857, British soldiers laid siege to Jhansi. Rani Lakshmi Bai went into battle. She was wounded badly while fighting and later succumbed to her injuries. She was only 22. Even the Britishers were humbled into acknowledging her courage, determination to save her kingdom and her patriotic spirit.

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Every generation has a patriot who makes all the difference. It is better to have risked and lost than to have never tried.

Patrick O'Henry gave a speech in the US, in March 1775, which is considered historical:

> "*If we wish to be free, we must fight. Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction?* ***Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery?*** *Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death.*"[1]

There is a world of a difference between preferences and convictions. Preferences are negotiable. Convictions are not.

"*Under pressure, PREFERENCES become weak whereas CONVICTIONS become even STRONGER.*"

I regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.

– Nathan Hale

The question is, why don't people take a stand?

They don't because it is inconvenient. So long as citizens prefer convenience to conviction, the country will always go downhill.

For good citizens, patriotism is a way of life.

PATRIOTISM: A MYTH OR REALITY?

Those who die for a cause, ignite the spark of life in the living. The word sacrifice is often given a negative connotation. It invokes fear in some people. Sacrifice does not always imply a loss – it is more about making choices. It may only mean giving up a small

[1] Chad Connelly, *Freedom Tide*, Executive Books, p. 75.

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thing for a greater good. Good leadership sacrifices not with resentment, but willingness. When citizens of a nation sacrifice their petty interests for the larger interests of the country, the nation undergoes positive development.

Love for one's country does not mean being blind to its social faults or deaf to its social discords.

There is a big difference between sacrificing for the family and sacrificing for the nation.

When a person sacrifices for the family, the family has something to gain. When a person sacrifices for the nation, the nation gains permanently, whereas the family loses forever.

Whenever self-interest comes in conflict with sacrifice for the greater good, the latter has to be prioritised. All great leaders in history had their personal agendas totally aligned with the national agendas.

There are no guarantees in life, nor any trouble-free tracks to success. Most successful leaders have not only had their share of failures, but also learnt their lessons and went forward with greater resolve only to pursue their positive vision.

He gave his life for a stranger and that stranger is you.

– Tribute to a Kargil soldier

Betrayal of a Patriot

Mr Satyendra Kumar Dubey, an engineer from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, was working as the Project Manager on the Gaya segment of the Golden Quadrilateral. He was murdered in Gaya in November 2003. The engineer, who was to have taken charge as Project Director shortly, had written to the Prime Minister and the Chairman, National Highways Authority of India, about the "loot of public money", in the execution of the project.

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The response from the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways to his murder, reads:

"The letter, received from the PMO on November 11, 2002 was unsigned and undated. The PMO receives between 400–500 letters everyday, of which a significant number are anonymous or improperly identified letters alleging irregularities and corruption."

What does this indicate? When would the highest office in the State receive 500 unsigned letters everyday?

1. For every unsigned letter received at the PMO, there may well be 10,000 that it doesn't receive. What does it go to prove? The magnitude of the problem as we see it today, is obviously, not even the tip of the iceberg.
2. Why do people send unsigned, anonymous letters?
   (a) They love their country.
   (b) They are hurting.
   (c) They are scared. Who are they scared of ? Not the local mafia, but the corrupt administration that does not protect its honest citizens. They are scared of betrayal by the government. Isn't this a breach of trust and treachery against our citizens and their constitutional rights?
   (d) They may be afraid that those who are corrupt and wield power and influence, could be vengeful.
   (e) They may be afraid a blackmailer would want to psychologically pressurise an honest person.

Shailesh Gandhi, Chairman, IIT Bombay Alumni Association, wrote:

> "*Why was Satyendra Dubey betrayed? Why didn't the officials in the PMO not heed Dubey's request for anonymity is not known. But just over a year later, on November 27, 2003, he was murdered in Gaya, Bihar.*
>
> *This is a clear signal to everyone that honesty in India*

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has only one result – failure. ***An honest citizen must be prepared to forfeit one's life.***

The office of the highest executive authority in the country not only failed to provide him security, it almost seems to have commissioned his murder.

We would then have to give up even a pretension to being a nation with enforceable laws and a Constitution.

We cannot be a party to a state, which expects a citizen to be a martyr if he wishes to counter dishonesty.

The best tribute can be a Whistle-blower's Act. Most people are badly hurt by the corruption in our country. This is the time for them, along with various bodies and associations, to get together and initiate a movement for a more honest society and good governance.

Satyendraji's well-planned assassination reminds me of Shaw's popular phrase. 'To be too good is to be bad.' You were too upright to succumb to the crooked ways of the world. You don't know perhaps the ironic aspect of the Darwinian theory, especially in our contemporary Indian context, the survival of the fittest in the morally etherised, corrupt system – the more you are adept at crooked dealings, the more fit you are to survive."

Whistle-blowers

Whistle-blowers and investigators expose themselves to danger and vengeance from the corrupt because they know or reveal too much. They and their loved ones put themselves at the risk of being silenced permanently.

Whistle-blower's Letter Gets a Quiet Burial

"*Despite months of public outrage over the murder of National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) engineer Satyendra Dubey in Bihar, the issues of corruption raised*

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by him in his letter to the Prime Minister have been given a quiet burial by the surface transport ministry. It has also given a clean chit to four big construction companies, named by Dubey as 'manipulators'."[2]

The central government blames the state government and the state government blames the central government, exonerating themselves of their own responsibilities. I guess all that we need now is murderers and criminals to put up their own disclaimers in the newspapers.

Bihar Governor Justice Rama Jois said at his Republic Day Address in 2004, that a sense of insecurity had gripped the people of Bihar. He said it was painful to learn from newspaper reports that people of other states were afraid of sending their wards to Bihar to attend any programme.

If that is not enough, read further.

"*We Indians are suffering from moral anaemia and spiritual cancer. The honest and upright man is ridiculed in the midst of corrupt and spiritually malnutritioned ones.*"[3]

I recently addressed a gathering of IIT students at Kharagpur and met a student who hailed from Bihar. I asked him, "How are things there?" His answer was, "Much worse than what you read in the papers. *Jungle raj* is a mild term. It is *rakshas raj* in Bihar." I asked him if he had a family there and how they were surviving in the lawless environment. His answer was very casual. He said, "I have two uncles who work in the PWD (Public Works Department). They have become part of the system and are making money, hand-over-fist." I asked him, why did his uncles make this choice. He replied that if they did not become a part of the system, they would have been destroyed and they chose not to go the *Satyendra Dubey* way.

[2] Akshaya Mukul, *The Times of India*, 20 January 2004.
[3] 'Pushpanjali', *The Indian Express*, 21 December 2003.

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This is the intelligentsia of India speaking. Can you imagine the plight of the common man on the street? If this is not state-sponsored extortion and blackmail, then what is? Have we not given legal status to the mafia? If this is not organised crime, then what is? What a tryst with destiny!

Do we really live in a civilised society? Is this democracy? Is this our culture? No wonder, 50 per cent of IIT students leave for other countries every year, because they don't want to live in a system that punishes the honest and rewards crooks. If this is not national shame, what is?

There was a time, only 30 years ago, that people leaving India when asked, "When will you come back?" used to answer, "In a few years." They said, "Let me make some money, get some education and I will be back." But today, when a young Indian leaves his country and you ask him the same question, his answer may be very different. He says, "I am not coming back. I am going to settle there." Is it that they don't love their country any more?

Corruption is the cause of brain drain.

People in a corrupt society feel insecure. They try to protect their future and that of their families by migrating from such an environment.

The morale of the nation and its citizens is adversely affected by corruption. Consequent to widespread corruption, people become demoralised. They stop working hard. Their levels of stress increase, as they constantly feel disgusted, frustrated and angry. Living among crooks who abuse their power for personal gains, compels victims of corrupt practices to choose to either fight them or join them. Joining them, often seems to be the easier option till they can find an opportunity overseas.

Given a choice, most citizens would like to move to a country that provides an environment where they can utilise their potential to

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prosper, live with dignity and improve the quality of life for themselves and their families.

NRIs: Physically There, Emotionally Here

Most first generation and many second generation NRIs have their hearts in India. At some point of time in life, they attempted and made efforts to come back and re-settle in India. However, it did not take them too long to realise that they were misfits. Why? Because just to survive in India, they had to trade-off their dignity and self-respect minute by minute and degenerate in their own estimation. Therefore, they chose to return to the country of adoption rather than live in their country of origin.

By and large, most NRIs are successful, have great entrepreneurial abilities, fall in a high tax bracket and provide employment opportunities to many thereby enriching the country of adoption. Most of them would be happy to bring their talents and investments into India without looking for monetary compensations. The only thing that prevents them from doing so is the fear of becoming a hostage to the corrupt system.

TRAITORS

A jellyfish sometimes swallows a snail and since the snail is protected in the shell, it remains alive. But for its survival, it needs food. So, it starts eating the jellyfish from inside and keeps growing till it consumes the entire jellyfish. This is nature in its true form. This is not fiction. It is always the enemy within that consumes and destroys society.

There are all kinds of criminals – murderers, rapists and extortionists. However, the worst kind of criminals are those that betray the nation. We have a social stigma against prostitution. However, a prostitute sells her body for existence, survival or out of need. A traitor, on the other hand, sells the nation out of greed. Which is worse? You decide!

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There are two kinds of traitors:

1. Active traitors.
2. Passive traitors.

Active traitors sell their motherland in the marketplace for personal gains.

Passive traitors watch their motherland being sold and remain silent.

The second kind is worse than the first. Why? Because the first one is a crook but the second one is not only a crook, but also a coward.

Treachery has Many Faces

1. Remember the Mumbai bomb blast of 1993 that killed over 300 innocent people? The RDX (explosive) used was smuggled by bribing customs officials to the tune of Rs 20 lakh.[4]
2. The Indian Consulate in Houston has issued 500 fake passports by taking bribes.[5]

We talk of terrorism. But the biggest question is: who is the terrorist? The one who got the passport or the one who issued the passport? Is this corruption or is this treachery and betrayal?

How many terrorists do you need to blow up the nation? You need one, but you've got 500 of them!

"*TERRORISM is a SIN and ACCEPTANCE of it is a bigger sin.*"

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3. Let us talk of investments in India.

[4] N. Vittal, Chief Election Commissioner.
[5] *Hindustan Times*, 21 January 2002.

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Dr Pierre Helg, the Swiss Deputy Minister made a statement that Indians have approximately US$ 2,500 billion in Swiss bank accounts. Even if this is a typographical error, it's a lot of money.[6]

The British did not do to us in 200 years, what our rascals have done in fifty years!

Traitors leave a legacy of disgrace.

A French writer once said, "More men are guilty of treachery through weakness than through a studied design to betray."

Treachery

Every society has its traitors who betray their nation for lust and luxury. Such people with inferiority complexes and ego problems want power, wealth and status at any cost. This is how we lost our independence, to begin with.

Benedict Arnold was one such traitor. During the American War of Independence, he sold military secrets to the British. His countrymen discovered the plot, but Arnold managed to escape to England because his existence in America would not be possible. However, once he was in England, people did not want to speak to him, or to be seen around with him. He was grossly insulted in public places. It is said that some people spat on his face. Wherever he went, his reputation as a traitor followed him. He was always known as "Benedict Arnold, the Traitor".

Muhammad of Ghur invaded India in the twelfth century. He attacked the territories of King Prithviraj Chauhan of Delhi and Ajmer. All the Rajput chiefs combined forces to lend Prithviraj their support. However, Jaichand, the ruler of Kannauj, stayed aloof because he nursed a personal grudge against the Chauhan king. He was jealous of Prithviraj's power and fame. This is how traitors behave. They sacrifice national interest for personal grudges.

[6] *Free Press*, 15 September 1999.

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Don't we see our politicians behaving the same way today? Isn't it a case of history being repeated?

Each time that we repeat the mistakes of history, the price tag becomes higher. One lesson that we have learnt from history is that **we have not learnt anything at all!**

When the British needed to bring all of Bengal under their hegemony, Mir Jafar, the Nawab's ambitious minister, helped them do it. In his greed to become the next Nawab, Mir Jafar advised his ruler, Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah, to order his soldiers to retreat at the Battle of Plassey, even when they were doing their best to defeat the British army. Siraj-ud-Daulah took his trusted minister's advice, lost his kingdom and eventually his life. Mir Jafar thus betrayed his own motherland into the hands of foreign invaders.

Greed is the traitor's only creed. A traitor can sup with the devil for his personal gains. It is, however, only a matter of time before the devil has the traitor for supper.

This may sound like wishful thinking, but I wish there was a law where traitors were not allowed to touch the national flag and disgrace it. I wish a traitor's blood ought not ever to be given to a soldier or a patriot.

It is the soldier, not the reporter,
Who has given us freedom of the press.
It is the soldier, not the poet,
Who has given us freedom of speech.
It is the soldier, not the campus organiser,
Who has given us the freedom to demonstrate.
It is the soldier,
Who salutes the flag,
Who serves beneath the flag,
And whose coffin is draped by the flag,
Who allows the protestor to burn the flag.

– Father Denis Edward O'Brien, USM

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3

Parasites in Action

A society may not look to be governed by a philosophical king or an ideal administrator, but it certainly needs and ought to be saved from being ruled by criminals even for a day.

The most uncommon kind of corruption is the corruption of the mind that chooses to forget the oath of office taken to serve the integrity of the nation, without fear.

Absence of vice may be ignored as a qualification (though it ought not to be), but the presence of virtue ought to be a prerequisite to lead the nation.

Mythology and history, time and time again, teach one thing. A person's character is judged not only by the friends one keeps but also by the kind of enemies one has. Experience shows very clearly that only a person of Ravana's thinking can be an enemy of Rama. Someone who thinks like Rama cannot be an enemy of Rama.

We often hear about a person that he is a good leader, but his followers are bad. The question that arises is who picked his followers. It seems evident that in life we get friends or

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followers who are not the kind of people we want, but the kind of people we are.

The devil can cite scriptures for his purpose.

– William Shakespeare

A busload of politicians fell off a road deep into a farmer's fields. Seeing this, the farmer rushed to the spot and started to dig a hole to bury the politicians.

Next day, the police came to investigate. They asked the farmer, "You buried all of them. But were they all dead?" The farmer replied, "Some of them said that they weren't. But you know, how politicians lie."

This might sound humourous, but the truth remains that there is a tremendous amount of popular distrust and contempt for the political community.

A young couple hired a chauffeur, who took the wife out shopping. When she came back, she was agitated and told her husband, "Fire this driver right now. He is a very rash driver. He almost killed me three times." The husband replied, "Honey, Don't be so hasty, give him another chance."

Some politicians are like this husband who is looking to give another chance to the driver to mess up.

VALUE-BASED LEADERSHIP

India has produced great leaders with high principles in every sphere of life.

1. ***Political leader:*** Sardar Patel, the Iron man, not only had character, but also the courage to implement his character.
2. ***Social leader:*** Raja Rammohun Roy, who stood for the emancipation of women.

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3. ***Spiritual leader:*** Swami Vivekananda is today remembered as a patriotic saint.
4. ***Corporate leader:*** JRD Tata, who had the vision and values on which the foundation of the TATA organisation was built.

Why are we deviating from the direction shown by them?

"*Good leaders SERVE THE NATION, bad leaders make the NATION SERVE THEM.*"

We often hear the adage, "*Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.*" That's not true. Power only corrupts those who are corruptible to begin with. Power only brings to the surface, that which was hiding beneath. In the hands of good people, it is a blessing, whereas in the hand of the crooked, it is a curse. For the crooked, power is a means of turning nasty dreams into realities.

Corruption is a natural outcome, when people have power without principles. All politicians and parties share one thing in common – the taxpayer's money.

Everyone in one form or another, is in a position of power – the teacher, the parent, the receptionist and even the peon outside the boss' office behaves as though he is the boss! Power cannot be divested of certain positions because it is needed to carry out the duties that the post demands. Anyone, who seeks power for the sake of power is suffering from an inferiority complex, is mentally sick and is on an ego trip. The feeling of inferiority creates the need to show one's superiority.

A new priest took over a temple and made efforts to ensure that the townspeople attended his discourses. A month later, a lady walked up to the priest to say, "We are so grateful to you for enlightening us because till the time you came into this community, we did not know what sin was."

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To some priests who are conmen really, religion is a way to extort and exploit. They disguise their hypocrisy by faking humility. The so-called liberators have created prisons of delusion for the people. They want people to sacrifice because of the fiction that they have substituted for reality.

Our politicians and priests, in the meantime, continue to preach the virtues of denial and patience on a hungry stomach. One question is for how long? Two, did they ever practice what they preached?

A priest once had a pet parrot. He taught the parrot all that he knew. The bird learnt everything and at a single command it would recite the scriptures. The priest's friends were highly impressed by the spiritually-learned parrot. One day, they brought in another parrot and requested the priest to ask the learned parrot to impart its spiritual training to the new bird. However, all that the learned parrot exclaimed on meeting the new bird (a female), was, "All my prayers have been answered!"

However, it is not just in India that we have problems caused by religion. In the West, people are slowly turning away from their religion. This is mostly because of the priests who fail to keep up with modern pressures and changing times. It is also in part, related to a realisation that the priests in front of us are often no angels themselves. Whilst they make us feel guilty for every single negative thought or emotion, we witness the awful problems of perversions in the Catholic Church, which brings to light, the true nature of many priests. The fact that these practices were widespread and tolerated for many decades shows us the corrupt nature of the senior leaders of the Church.

Truth liberates a person, but the priest feels threatened by it because it affects his source of income. Truth is a liberator, whereas false ideologies enslave people. Priests use fear motivation and emotional

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blackmail to exploit the masses. Their misinterpretations and misrepresentations make the truth disappear.

Bertrand Russell once said, "If the whole world became happy, I can guarantee that there would be no religion anymore."

One night at a police station, it was rather quiet and the policemen were playing cards to pass time. One of the officers said, "What a dull life! Tonight there are no fights, no riots, no thefts, no robberies, no murder, no nothing!" His officer said, "Relax. Things will work out. Just have faith in human nature."

Many people conveniently adopt religion, so as to hold God responsible for all their misdeeds. A criminal like Adolf Hitler, also sought the blessings of priests. The priest lends religious sanction to the politician. The politician then, lawfully assumes political power and in turn, protects the priest. The priest, then blesses the politician twice over. The nexus between the priest and the politician is so ancient and strong that they keep conniving to invent new ways of exploiting the ignorant and the innocent. They be fool not because they are smart, but because the masses are not enlightened.

The politician promises people the moon in this world, and the priest promises them the moon in the next. THEY BOTH LIE.

We claim to be religious, but it seems it does not touch our hearts. If we were truly religious, it would translate into love for the country and fellow human beings.

A man visited a town, which was famous for its temples. Every hundred yards that he walked, he saw a temple. As he checked into a hotel, quite amazed at the sights, he said to the hotel clerk, "Well, it certainly is a pleasure to be here. I've never seen so many temples anywhere in the world. People must really love God out here." The hotel clerk replied, "I don't know about that, but they surely fight a lot around here."

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The only way to bring about a change in the polity, is to bring about a positive change in morality.

ABUSE OF POWER

One night, a mugger pointed a gun at a well-dressed man and said, "Give me all your money." The man replied, "You probably don't know, who I am. I am a politician." The mugger said, "In that case, give me all my money."

"*GOOD people PRAY for others, while RASCALS PREY on others.*"

Politicians are supposed to be the servants of the people, whereas priests are supposed to be the spiritual guides to society. Dirty politics has the power to enslave humanity and destroy freedom. Priesthood and religion are supposed to elevate human consciousness. Religion is associated with the search for truth and such a search must make a person humble. Buddhas and Nanaks were the gifts of spirituality, whereas the Hitlers and the Stalins were the gifts of politics.

HEADS – I WIN, TAILS – YOU LOSE!

A crooked politician asked his friend to lend him $ 200. His friend said, "I have only $ 100 right now." The politician took it and said, "That's fine. You now owe me $ 100, and since I only took a hundred from you, the account is squared up."

A politician was a chief guest at a birthday party. As he was entering, an industrialist came in a very expensive car. The politician stopped and casually asked, "Could I have the keys to your car?" Without suspecting anything, the industrialist handed over the keys.

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The politician gave the keys to his nephew who was standing near him saying, "This is a gift from uncle to you." The industrialist was speechless and helpless. That's our tryst with destiny! It might sound like fiction, but its not. What a tragedy! Guess, who is running the country? By the way, this is not an isolated incident. Similar incidents from all over the country are reported every other day.

Bad politicians survive on lies and false promises. Their greatest ability lies in playing on emotions, creating confusion and conflict. They create problems where none exist. They create personal fortunes from other people's misfortunes. Once in power they forget that they are elected to serve and not to be served. Citizens sometimes abstain from voting because the choice lies between two evils. Regardless of who you choose, evil is still evil.

Adolf Hitler wrote in his autobiography, "In order to remain in power, create fictitious enemies if you have to, and show that your country is in danger. It scares people and when people are afraid, it is easy to keep them enslaved."[1] Jinnah even though not being a religious man used religion as his tool to create Pakistan.

> *Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it whether it exists or not, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong remedy.*
>
> – Sir Ernest Benn

Power conflicts politicise religion.

Priests have distorted the truth by lending interpretations that suit their own purposes. Memorising scriptures and collecting donations in the name of religion has become one of the biggest businesses. One wonders how the priests transmit money to God. The more spiritually enlightened people are, the stronger they become emotionally and they have a lesser need for someone to mediate

[1] *Priest and the Politician*, Osho, p. 7.

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between them and God. (Caution: This does not mean that a person does not need a good teacher. We all need a good teacher. Education helps to differentiate between enlightenment and gullibility.)

An elderly woman got sentimental as she was bidding a priest farewell. The priest tried to console her and said, “Lady, don’t worry. You’ll get a better priest to replace me.” She said, “That’s what they told me the last time too.”

Every religion tries to increase its numbers. Hidden behind religion is the politics of numbers. True spirituality is not interested in war. It searches for peace. Crooked priests are actually politicians playing games in the name of religion.

Joan of Arc was burnt and declared a witch by the Pope. Had she committed any sin? Was the Pope both the judge and the jury? Was he the final authority? The courageous young woman who fought and won freedom for her country, caused much jealousy and heart-burn in others. When people found out the truth, they gradually raised their voices against her crucifixion and 300 years later, another Pope declared her a great saint. Interestingly, one Pope had her burnt alive and 300 years later, his own successor, another Pope, bestowed sainthood on her. Dilemma for the common man: Does the verdict bring greater clarity or confusion in the name of religion?

The interfacing of politics and religion is supposed to raise the consciousness of society. But it is the reverse that is taking place. Politics and priesthood are responsible for most of that which is ugly in society. Politicians gather votes based on what the public falls for, not what the politicians themselves stand for. Later, they don’t “walk-the-talk” but do exactly what they want. There’s a term used in investment banking for this behaviour – “bait and switch.” Bait people with the right words and then switch the deal when its too late to change.

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"We are SUFFERING because citizens have GIVEN and TAKEN VOTES based on CASTE/RELIGION and not PRINCIPLES."

Mafiadom is no more the domain of any one person or institution. It has become like a franchise operation. Every community has its own mafia. Connections between people in positions of power and criminals is common. The political connections of the mafia are not only limited to criminalisation of politics, but has become a part of the bureaucracy and the business community. Maintaining private armies has become a common practice.

When buying and selling are controlled by corrupt politicians, the first things to be bought and sold are politicians.

Corrupt politicians create unrest and watch destruction as sadists. In a corrupt society, the real criminals are the corrupt politicians and not those who are suffering in jails.

Two teams were playing football. Both teams got together, prayed briefly and were all charged up to play a great game. A young boy asked a priest sitting next to him, "What will happen if both teams are of equal match and have prayed with equal fervour?" The priest replied, "In that case, I think God will sit back and simply enjoy a great game of football."

I am often asked who my role models are. My answer is, within the Indian context, my role models are Guru Gobind Singh, Rana Pratap, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayanand, Bhagat Singh, Netaji and Sardar Patel. What makes them my role models? What qualities are common to all of them?

1. Each one of them stood firm showing great character and integrity.
2. They were leaders who built teams and carried everyone together.

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3. They had the courage to stand alone against the world when duty called upon them to do so.
4. These leaders never looked for followers. They wanted to create more leaders.

Didn't the Kauravas behave like the mafia? Didn't they burn down the Pandavas' house in the middle of the night when the latter were in exile? Isn't this exactly what the mafia is doing today?

Religion has become a camouflage. Ravana was able to kidnap Sita only when he disguised himself as a *sadhu*. Don't we see enough Ravanas in disguise today? Unprincipled human beings are likely to continue being driven by greed to exploit their fellow beings in the name of whatever they can lay their hands on, including religion. Caution: That does not mean that a person has to be suspicious of everyone in the whole world, but there is no substitute for maturity of judgement.

RAIDERS OF THE TEMPLE

Religion has become, probably, the most profitable business. Temples and places of worship have become money-making machines. Holy attires, often conceal racketeering and cheating, amounting to daylight robbery.

The priests use fear motivation to scare the ignorant and fleece them. A case in point – even when people go to perform the last rites of the dead, the priests collect money for every ritual. If the client questions the relevance of what the priest is doing, the answer that is given is:

1. You don't know.
2. If you don't do it, the departed soul will not rest in peace.
3. The departed soul will haunt you.
4. Tragedy will befall your family and that may include death.

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The family members not only carry back the grief of the loss of a loved one, but also become a victim of the crooked priests.

Having travelled to many countries, I wonder what happens the moment you get out of the geographical boundaries of India and enter territories where these rituals are not performed. Do all the departed souls end up becoming restless, and if so, where are they? Do they haunt all their living relatives?

1. Are Indian souls hard to please?
2. Are Indian priests the smartest sales people who use fear as the motivation to squeeze life out of the living?
3. Are the living, superstitious and gullible, and hence, prone to becoming sitting ducks?

"We have to PROTECT not only what we have inherited, but what we are leaving for our CHILDREN."

Those who take the food from the table
Teach contentment,
Those for whom the taxes are destined
Demand sacrifice,
Those who eat their fill speak to the hungry
Of wonderful times to come,
Those who lead the country into the abyss
Call ruling too difficult for ordinary men.

– Bertolt Brecht

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4

Social Capital

Progress, in a country, is measured not by industry or infrastructure or the wealth that its citizens possess, but by the quality of life they lead. Civilisation, on the other hand, is measured by the quality of character of the citizens. The strength of a society is its social capital.

- Politics is about the creation and distribution of power.
- Economics is about the creation and distribution of wealth.
- Languages are about communication and uniting societies.
- Moralities are about setting benchmarks to live by.
- Family is about discovering the bonds of love and trust.
- Schools and communities are places of learning and interdependence.
- Collectively, we learn to speak the language of 'We' and not 'Me' or 'I'.

To sum up, families, communities and schools produce and distribute social values. Collectively, it is called social capital.

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The Jewish community is a prime example of being rich in social capital. Family members are forever willing to sacrifice for each other. As a community, they network and support each other. Their faith gives them confidence, self-respect and builds trust. When a Jewish immigrant arrives in New York, people of the community will help him get started and give him food and shelter. As he finds his feet and begins to achieve success, he repays those who supported him by helping the other new immigrants. Our Gujarati community in the USA is an outstanding example of being very supportive of the members of the group. They participate actively in local politics and seek help from voluntary organisations. This helps them manage their lives.

A society is a summed-up reflection of its members, with some things binding them together. **We need to learn that rules are not made to get in the way of the game and make it boring. In reality, rules make the game possible.** Living in a society, therefore, requires everyone to follow rules, which need to be understood, internalised and enforced. To reject the fact that we have to live by rules, is to support the idea of a society in which every driver is free to choose any side of the road, based on his preference. Guess, what the result will be? People will soon start walking as they did in the middle-ages. Anthropologists confirm that there has never been a society without rules.

In most societies, a family is defined by marriage, that gives social sanction to the sexual union of a man and a woman with certain do's and don'ts. Why do we speak of a certain person as being honourable? Is it because he has certain characteristics like integrity, fairness and dignity?

The dilemma we face is not that our morals are not clearly defined, but that we succumb to weaknesses. This explains the conflict that sometimes occurs within our conscience. As human beings, we all play different roles in life. The same person has to play the role of a child, parent, soldier, citizen and a teacher. In each such

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situation, it is natural to get anxious and sometimes feel remorseful. It takes clarity of values, wisdom and finally, courage to be secure in the feeling that one has done justice to each role.

> *To make your children capable of honesty is the beginning of education.*
>
> – John Ruskin

When a parent teaches his children positive values, he is doing the most important duty a parent can perform. He gives the children a road map, so as to bring them back on track if they ever lose their way. Habits of discipline, being considerate to others, respect for rules, sacrificing self-gratification for larger interests would serve them well, regardless of the path they choose. All this means handing down a culture to future generations. All these are preconditions of maturity and civility.

It would be totally absurd to leave the entire burden of teaching spiritual and moral values of society to schools.

Deep beneath the surface of a 'good' family are certain fundamental values, such as fidelity, loyalty, responsibility, authority, obedience, justice and caring. Collectively, they define the relationship between the parent and the child. These values lead to expectations – that spouses would not cheat on each other and that the children would respect and obey the parents, even if they don't fully understand their reasoning, because they assume that parental request is consistent, fair and in the best interest of the child.

Another expectation is that family members would not walk away from one another or ignore their calls for help at any time, especially during a crisis. All these are norms, unless there are extreme exceptions. All these norms make the family a social institution. It is something that is passed on from one generation to the next, by example and teaching. However, when the rules are broken, there is a breach of trust. Unless the breach is mended, the family will

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not be the same again. The family relies on qualities of predictability and dependability. These relationships are not based on power or exchange. The family can't be secure if it is bullied or if a monetary value is imposed on services rendered within it. That would not make it a family at all!

Give your children the right direction by being a good role model. If we do not teach honesty by our actions, we are compounding problems for the coming generations. How can children learn honesty unless they see it in action in their role models?

An honest man is the noblest work of God.

– Alexander Pope

"Crime has been associated with poverty and unemployment. That may be only partially true. In the United States, with increased prosperity and greater employment, crime had risen almost 10 times since 1950. With each decade of prosperity and employment, the rate of crime doubled. The divorce rate increased, drug and alcohol abuse increased, more families broke down and there were many more instances of childbirth out of wedlock.

Children from single parents or broken homes are more likely to suffer from emotional distress, behavioural problems, criminal behaviour, drug-addiction and (are unlikely) to sustain good relationships."[1]

If there is such a thing as moral responsibility, then we have to undertake the moral responsibility of those we bring into being. We have a duty to fulfil our undertaking, that is, the duty to honour the pledge of a marriage. It is a moral bond. If marriage is considered holy, then adultery automatically becomes a sin. The definition of right and wrong is evident. Some moral judgements are unavoidable, if we want to protect things that have sanctity. Adultery is wrong, because it is the betrayal of a commitment and a breach

[1] Jonathan Sacks, *The Politics of Hope*, Vintage, p. 127.

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of trust. Even if it is not discovered, it remains just that – a breach of trust. And if discovered, there is no way of avoiding pain. Even if there is forgiveness after this, the poisonous seed of suspicion and mistrust has been planted. If the breach of trust continues, then the relationship that was built on commitment is destroyed.

It is then that, marriage does not remain a mutual commitment. One person's illicit pleasure breaks it up. Like most immoral acts, adultery involves putting short-term pleasure ahead of long-term happiness and commitment. It devalues commitment and the promise undertaken. It affects the world around us. What we do today, others may do in future, consciously or unconsciously by following our example. It takes courage to make great commitments, including marriage. Such commitments today are unfortunately not given the same weightage or support that they deserve.

As our values go down, pre-marital and extra-marital sex becomes more and more acceptable. What makes pre-marital and extra-marital sex inappropriate and immoral? There is a time and place for everything. There is sanctity attached to every behaviour. Who decides the time, place and sanctity? Two factors: one, social norms and two, our conscience. The Laws of Nature governs both appropriateness and sanctity. There is a time to sow and a time to harvest and there is a gestation period between the two. Abstinence does not necessarily mean deprivation or restriction. It only means self-discipline, living with one's conscience and respecting oneself and others.

The following is how we create a negative culture in our organisation, family and society.

UNCULTURED CULTURE

The following is an extract from my book, *Living With Honour*:

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A phone call comes to my office. If I can't take the call, my staff will not lie and say I am not there.

If a creditor calls our office saying that he hasn't received a cheque that was due to him, our staff would not lie that the cheque is in the mail. If I teach my secretary to lie for me, a day would come when she would lie to me too.

Now, let us take the case of family. I am sure you will agree that children are not born liars. They learn to lie.

A child answers the phone enthusiastically. The caller asks, "Can I talk to your dad?" The child replies, "Of course." He goes running to his father and says, "Dad, there is a call for you." "Who is it? asks the father." The child gives him the name. The father says, "I don't want to talk to him. Go tell him I am not here." "But, daddy, you are here." "Yes" says the father, "but go tell him I am not here." "But daddy, you are." This time the father says in a harsh tone – "Do you want me to teach you a lesson? Go tell him I am not here." So, the child goes back, scratching his head and wondering, "Dad is here but he says, 'Go tell him I am not here.' But he is still here."

The child's enthusiasm level comes down because he has never lied before. He is uncomfortable because, for the first time in his life he is confused. He does not know what to do. He just wants to get out of the situation. So, he picks up the receiver and says, "Dad says dad is not at home" and bangs the phone down. The father hears that one, gives a knock on his son's head and says, "You just made a liar out of Daddy." Guess, who made a liar out of whom?

After the child learns his lesson, he says, "No more confusion, Dad. I am clear now. Watch me." Next time the phone rings and somebody asks for his father, he says, "I'll check." He goes running to his Dad and says, "Dad, call for you." "Who is it?" Asks dad. So-and-so, informs the child. Before Dad can say a word, the child says, "Dad, you don't have to talk to him. I'll tell him you're not here." Daddy says, "Son, I want to talk to him." The child says, "No dad, you don't have to." Look at what happened. Even before daddy says a word, the kid is ready to

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lie for daddy. Does this happen in many homes or am I exaggerating it? Right from childhood, the child is learning to tell small lies and by the time he grows up, he becomes just that – an expert liar! He has perfected the art of telling lies.

This example may be extended to stealing, cheating and many other practices. Practice does not make perfect. Practice only makes permanent whatever you practice. Some people keep practicing their mistakes and they become perfect in making mistakes. Every time the kid does something wrong like lying, stealing or cheating, he falls down a little in his own eyes. His self-esteem goes down and his inferiority complex goes up. This is worth repeating, and is universally true that whenever a person does something wrong like lying, stealing, cheating, his self-esteem goes down even when there is no one watching. The converse too is true. Whenever we do something positive, we rise a little bit in our own eyes even if no one is watching. That is the magic of self-esteem.

Many times people justify lying by saying, "This is only a small lie. When the big one comes, I'll tell the truth." In reality, when we practice telling enough small lies, when the big one comes, we end up telling a bigger lie. Why? Because these behaviours become permanent. Similarly, we practice cowardice often enough, consoling ourselves that when the big moment comes, I will show courage. But when the big occasion does come, what happens? We end up showing cowardice. Because that's what we have practiced and it has become permanent. Remember, practice only makes permanent whatever we practice. Only perfect practice makes perfect.

ANOTHER REAL-LIFE SITUATION

A man has two children aged six and ten. He goes to the state park and sees a sign at the ticket counter saying, "Children under five go free." Just before he reaches the ticket counter, he tells his younger child, "If the ticket clerk asks you your age, tell him it is quarter to five."

We teach our children to lie for two bucks.

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The example below shows on the contrary, how a parent teaches good values to his children.

There is another man with two kids aged six and ten. He sees the same sign at the park, but proceeds to ask for one adult's ticket and two kids' tickets. The cashier looks at the younger child and asks how old he is. The father says, 'six'. The cashier is amazed and says, "If you hadn't told me, I would never have known. He could have easily passed off for an under-five." The father replies, "Even if you would never come to know, my son would." Guess whose kids are more likely to become good adults?

I repeat, we teach our kids to lie for two bucks. Once they grow up, they would sell their conscience for two bucks.

A career that begins in minor thefts, turns, in the natural course of events, to violence.

A man on his deathbed called his son, who was a politician and said, "All my wealth and worldly possessions are yours after my death. The politician-son said in a sad tone, "Dad, I can't tell you how grateful I am to you. I know that I am unworthy too. But is there anything I can do to help you right now?" His father replied, "I would appreciate it if you took your foot off the oxygen pipe."

A publisher asked me to write books on character building for school children. I asked him, what was his purpose in asking me to author these books. The answer was, "Character building." My question to him was, "How does a principal teach character to the students, when the student knows that his parents paid money for his admission?" I added, "You could have a hundred books on character building but if you have one dishonest principal, you will have 2,000 dishonest kids." The reverse is also true. If you have one honest principal, you have 2,000 honest kids.

Why are we hurting?

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The reason is *dishonest behaviour has become endemic to* our society, leading to a nation full of *people suffering from an inferiority complex* who would *compromise values for self-interest*. That being the case, aren't we *breeding traitors in our homes?* Hence, when people ask, "What is holding India back?" I retort that if the above behaviour is not a negative behaviour, then people are either brain-dead or blind not to see the reality!

We keep wondering why in spite of our resources, we are still hurting. I wonder what's there to wonder? The answer is evident, isn't it?

A village once initiated a milk collection drive for poor children. It was agreed that before daybreak every family in the village would contribute a glass of fresh milk to the collection. One villager thought, "Since the whole village is contributing, it will do no harm if I put in water instead of milk. Nobody will find out and they would have collected enough milk from others anyway and I will have more for my family." In the darkness of early morning they all poured their contributions into a common container. At the appointed time when the container was opened in the presence of all the villagers, it was filled to the brim. But guess what! WITH WATER!

Are you like the villagers of the above story? Would you like to live in a village where you have such neighbours where everyone is selfish and dishonest? **Irresponsible people are more interested in individual profits than individual responsibility.** People who benefit from exploitation in society, do not meet their responsibilities as human beings. A country becomes poor when it falls in spirit and insight. Destructive societies can't complain about the lack of advancement because they constantly find ways of destroying the social system. Such societies breed disparity and poverty and people who exploit others in these communities are known as parasites.

"Narrow and negative politics have destroyed the very foundations

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of our civic set-up and deprived it of its *raison d'être* (reason for existence). Today, far from serving as an institution for service and acting as a springboard for providing experienced and honest leadership at the state and the national levels, it has, by and large, become a happy hunting ground for the corrupt, crafty and selfish elements.

History is no blind goddess and she has never excused blindness in others. She is not going to make an exception in our case. We all have to pay a heavy price for acting like blind men with lanterns in our hands."[2]

"Citizens who value their PRIVILEGES over principles, end up LOSING both."

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[2] Jagmohan in an article in *National Review*, p. 72, December 2003.

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5

Citizens: Crooks or Custodians?

Citizen: A citizen is a privileged member of a nation, with rights and responsibilities.

Crook: A crook is a professional swindler and a dubious character.

Custodian: A custodian is a person who looks after things 'in trust' for someone else or acts as a guardian.

CITIZENS

A good citizen is someone who uses his wishbone for a vision, knuckles for hard work, jaws to persuade others and create a team, and a backbone that demonstrates courage to implement his vision.

In reality, a citizen who is a parasite has four different bones:

1. ***A wishbone:*** He only has wishes, dreams and hallucinations,

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and he does nothing. His conversations always go, "I wish . . ."

2. ***A knuckle bone:*** His only function in life is to keep knocking down everything regardless of how good it is.
3. ***A jaw bone:*** He is only a talker, not a doer. He himself does nothing but always criticises others' acts, no matter how good they are. In short, he has a problem to every solution.
4. ***A backbone:*** This is a person who uses his backbone to oppress and bully the innocent.

Good societies do not happen on their own. They are a result of consciously-made decisions and are great moral achievements.

Baby Palak On A Mission

"Twelve-year old baby Palak is the first child singer, who has dedicated herself to the cause of human welfare. Palak has given nearly 350 stage performances in different cities. She has collected Rs 69 lakh in the last 48 months and used this amount in getting heart operations done on 129 poor children. Nearly 290 more are on her waiting list. Palak wants that her mission will continue by the blessings of little hearts." (Facts as per her bio-data)

What this 12-year old has done, most people don't do in their lifetime. There are two kinds of people in every society:

1. Takers: They eat well.
2. Givers: They sleep well.

Throughout history, every society has had its share of selfless givers and shameless destroyers.

Every nation writes its own autobiography through the actions or inactions of its citizens.

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CROOKS

A man was driving his car on a dirt road. His car got stuck in a puddle. He got out of his car to look around for help and found two people sitting by the fields. The man asked them for help. They got the car out of the puddle. The car owner, out of gratitude, pulled out a hundred rupees and gave it to them saying, "You are such good people. If it wasn't for your help, I would have been stuck." As he was leaving, he asked the two men, "What do you do for your living?" They replied, "This is what we do. After you leave, we are going to pour more water on the dirt track, create another puddle and wait for the next car."

Some of the things that are worth thinking about are:

1. Do such situations actually happen or are they just fiction?
2. Are you living in a community surrounded by the kind of people such as those in the above narrative?
3. Are you also one of them?
4. Are you a spectator who remains indifferent to such incidents? If you are, aren't you an accomplice?

If you are a member of a society in which the answer to any of the above is 'YES', what kind of a society or a culture do you live in?

LET'S LOOT TOGETHER!

An example seen across the nation is where gates are lowered at railway crossings deliberately. Since the trains are often irregular, the traffic halts encourage people to buy foods at nearby shops and the gatekeeper shares the profits. Can you imagine the economic cost to society in terms of the loss of man-hours and inefficiency?

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A LOSING GAME

Three engineers and three lawyers were travelling by train to a conference. The three lawyers bought their tickets. The three engineers, however, bought only one. One of the lawyers asked, "How will you manage with a single ticket?" The engineers answered, 'Watch'. They boarded the train. The lawyers took their assigned seats, but the three engineers locked themselves in the toilet. The train departed. The conductor came to check for tickets and he knocked at the toilet door. An arm holding the ticket stuck out. The conductor was satisfied and went away. The lawyers were embarrassed. "Why didn't we think of this?" they said.

On their way back, they thought they would do the same thing. On their return journey, they bought a single ticket. They found that the three engineers were also returning on the same train, but this time they didn't buy any ticket. The lawyers were surprised and asked, "How will you manage without a ticket?" The engineers said, 'Watch'. All of them boarded the train. The train started moving. The three engineers and the three lawyers locked themselves in separate toilets. After a while, one of the engineers came out, went to the lawyers' toilet, knocked and asked for the ticket. A hand came out, offering the ticket. The engineer took the ticket and went back to his toilet.

The moral of the story is that, each person is not only looking for loopholes to cheat the system, but there is also a competition about "Who's the bigger crook?"

This is one race where there are no winners, only losers. Is this the culture we want to live with or leave behind?

CUSTODIANS

There was an elderly person planting some acorns. A passerby stopped and said, "Look at you! At your age, do you think you

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will live long enough to see the oak tree?" The man replied, "Did I plant all the trees that have given me shade and fruits? There are people coming into this world after my time. Aren't we custodians of the next generation?"

The power of concerned citizens

1. "An NGO in Rajasthan a few years ago, dramatically demonstrated how the funds meant for the IRDP programmes were being misused. *Its leaders built a grassroot movement that triggered a broad debate and a nationwide demand for the public's right to scrutinise official records – a crucial check against arbitrary governance.*

Basing themselves in the village of Dev Dungri, they have achieved extraordinary results by generating a mass movement that has virtually forced governments to accept transparency as a policy. They established their credibility by taking on a classical villain, the landlord, who had grabbed the land and was trying to intimidate villagers into abandoning the area. Their protests forced him to give back the land he had usurped. When they examined the local records on behalf of an old woman who was denied even the minimum wage set for local projects, they concluded that *rural workers are easily exploited because of a lack of transparency in India's administration run on 'colonial' lines. This culture of secrecy fosters corruption*, which has led to village officials paying contractors for non-existent work.

After their search, they decided to present their data to the villagers rather than bang their heads against an indifferent government. They conducted a series of public hearings and, despite official stonewalling, the activists produced compelling evidence. Payments had been issued for clinics, schools and public toilets that were never built, for workers who were long-dead, and worse, for disaster-relief services that never arrived.

Villagers around the region began calling for their own social audits

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to expose corrupt officials. They asked to examine bills, vouchers, progress reports and employment rolls. Whenever officials refused to open their books, the organisation staged dharnas or sit-ins to demand more information. These climaxed into a 52-day protest to pressurise the Rajasthan government to make public its development fund records. The campaign succeeded because it helped people expose the links between public officials and unscrupulous contractors."[1]

A society depends more on its citizens' character than their intelligence.

2. ***The Jalandhar trader who rescued 50 people:*** "In every tragedy one finds survivors, saviours and scavengers. A man from Jalandhar, Mr Ajmer Singh was the saviour, when through his courage and presence of mind, he rescued 50 people from a carriage that was hanging precariously from a bridge. This pertains to the Rajdhani Express train accident that took place in September 2002."[2]

Some people meet a challenge head-on, while others run away from it. Most people seek short-cuts in life, but the ones who make a difference, seek the right path, even if it proves to be difficult.

Then there are some people who are scavengers. They steal the watches and belongings of those who are dead, without even making an effort to save the lives of those who could be saved.

3. ***Rain harvesting:*** It is possible to banish drought completely in ten years' time, if the government puts its mind to harvesting rain.

Across several hundred villages of the previously drought-hit Alwar district of Rajasthan, and in many more across India, localised

[1] Central Vigilance Commissioner's Report.
[2] *The Times of India,* 12 September 2002.

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water harvesting has solved the problem of water shortage even in the absence of big dams, canals and river-linking projects.

The credit for this goes to Rajendra Singh, winner of the 2001 Ramon Magsaysay Award. Tarun Bhagat Sangh, a non-governmental organisation, led by Rajendra Singh as its general secretary, using the traditional wisdom of the rural people, has worked actively to build earthen check dams to collect rainwater and revive rivers.

4. ***Saragrahi battle:*** "What has made the history of mankind so interesting and great are the events, wherein ordinary men with unmatched courage, perseverance and an indomitable spirit, have faced the heaviest and the most insurmountable odds, prevailed over these, or simply perished for the larger cause.

One such memorable event was the famous Battle of Saragrahi, which was fought by a handful of Sikh soldiers – 22 to be exact – of the XXXVI Sikh regiment, which formed a part of the British Indian Army, against thousands of Pathans (10,000) in the North-Western Frontier Province (now in Pakistan) in September 1897. All 22 Sikh soldiers perished in battle, as they 'fought to the last bullet and last breath', but did not yield even an inch to the enemy.

The epic battle which is one of the ten most famous battles in the world, is worth recalling and recording. In the end, the lone survivor, the detachment's signaler, also joined the fight and his last message to his Commanding Officer was, 'I will be engaging the enemy from now onwards with my rifle and will not be sending any more messages.' The garrison fought valiantly and in true 'khalsa' spirit, sacrificed the last man till the last round.

The story of this epic battle is taught to school children in France and is one of the eight stories in collective bravery published by the UNESCO."[3]

[3] *Daily Excelsior,* 22 September 1996.

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As custodians, we need to ask ourselves many **'whys'**:

1. Why do we litter public places and throw garbage on the street when it leads to unhygienic conditions and becomes a health hazard? (Why shouldn't we take pride in having civic sense and keeping our surroundings clean?)
2. Why do we waste water by leaving taps running or leaking when there are many people who are thirsting for a drop of water?
3. Why do we leave lights on even during the day when there are many people who don't have lights even at night?
4. Why have we become so spiritually weak that we let the agents of God exploit us?
5. Why do we destroy our forests causing ecological imbalance when electric crematoriums have been adopted in many countries?
6. Why do we call wind and solar energy as 'alternate energy' when it can be a significant source of energy, saving national resources and foreign exchange?
7. Why do we have to go through floods and drought every year when the problem can be solved permanently by proper water management?
8. Why do we manipulate the spirit of spirituality when we don't have the basics of humanity?
9. Why do we have to waste foreign exchange to import oil for energy needs when we can substantially solve our problem through ethanol, which is agro-based, just like Brazil has done.

During a visit to Ranchi, I was invited to meet a great human being by the name of Mrs Davis. By helping the poor, sick and mentally challenged, she and her husband have given their lives to serving humanity, totally selflessly. This 85-year young lady is suffering from lung cancer. As I walked into her room, I saw a bright smiling face full of life. She narrated that a doctor had visited her and

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said, "I am sorry Mrs Davis, you are suffering from cancer. I feel sad." She replied, "Doctor, the way you are speaking, you are depressing. You need some counseling yourself." She said, "If anybody needs to rejoice, I ought to because I have lived a very satisfying and a fulfilling life and I shall continue to do so. I am going to beat this cancer and rejoice everyday." After half-an hour of a lifetime education in positivity, she insisted that I call her 'mummy' and not Mrs Davis. As I was taking leave, she said authoritatively and with great pride, "You cannot leave the premises without paying respect to my husband who passed away a few years ago, after having founded this medical facility for the poor. His last wishes were that when he dies, he should be cremated and the ashes be buried inside the compound and right on the ashes, a mango tree be planted. A tree takes in carbon dioxide and gives out oxygen." Mr Davis said, "During my lifetime, I gave all I could and after I die, I wish to continue giving oxygen and fruit to people." I took leave from Mrs Davis. The tree is planted in the compound of the hospital. We went and paid respect. Her parting words were, "Shiv! I am a fighter. I shall fight this cancer and win. I will see you again in few years. In the meantime, just do one thing for me – just pray for me everyday." She added, "You keep fighting for those who cannot fight for themselves or their dignity."

These are the unsung heroes who serve our society from birth to death, but are never written about in history.

Most people read history,
Many teach history but,
Very few create history.

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6

Self-Destructive Culture

A young couple, in a Western country, went to the Justice of Peace to get their marriage certificate. The Justice looked at the certificate and said, "The girl's middle initial is missing." The girl requested, "I have an identification card for verification. Can you just put it and I'll initial it?" The Justice said, "No. The county clerk has filled the form. You need to take it back to him." They complied and rushed back to the Justice. The latter looked at the form and said, "There's no date on it." The couple requested, "Can you please ...?" He said 'No'. They went back to the county clerk. This time the Justice looked at it and said, "There's no county stamp. You don't expect me to put that, because that's not my job. Take it back to the clerk." Totally harassed, the couple went back to the county clerk and finally returned to the Justice. He said, "That's better" and gave his approval. He then noticed that there was a three-year-old boy with the couple. "Whose son is that?" he asked. 'Ours', said the couple. "Yours? That means you had the child before you were married?" asked the Justice. They replied, 'Yes'. The

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Justice said, "Well, it's really none of my business but I hope you realise that he is technically a bastard." The young father replied, "Isn't that strange? The county clerk said the same thing about you!"

Those who gain from misgovernance, always oppose reform initiatives.

A characterless bureaucracy is the result of the lack of owning up to omissions and commissions. This type of bureaucracy does not look to address issues and solve problems – rather, it looks for scapegoats. Facts are analysed wrong and eventually, wrong conclusions are arrived at. Solutions are thus worse than the problems. Do we not witness the same problem in India?

Today's PROBLEMS are the results of yesterday's SHORT-SIGHTED SOLUTIONS.

"The most perilous threat to the free society today is neither political nor economic. It is the poisonous, corrupting culture of relativism. The people know this, while the intellectuals do not. If our intellectuals better knew this, they would be sounding the alarm."

– Michael Novak

We plan and scheme to encourage dishonesty. We find ways to legalise dishonesty, an example of which is the Voluntary Declaration Scheme. An honest taxpayer pays an income tax of 40 per cent, but the cheat gets an opportunity to pay only 30 per cent and gets amnesty too!

The bureaucracy in India has created an environment in which it is much safer to pass the file or pass the buck than to take a decision, which means that there is only activity but no achievement of targets.

The bureaucracy can be made accountable, only if there is fairness

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in the assessment of performance. This can happen only if there are predefined benchmarks. Projects that start with an initial cost of one rupee, end up costing between five and ten rupees because of delays, clearances required, vested interests and corruption. The honest majority pays for the dishonest minority.

Hypothetically speaking, if the government decided to give a free car to every citizen, the problems then would be – who would get the bigger car, what colour, two doors or four doors, petrol or diesel, etc. Edward Gibbon in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* says, "The Roman empire declined because politicians discovered that instead of encouraging work and savings, there is an easier way of making money by taxation. The politicians raised the price of wine, which resulted in destruction of half of the orchards. Now they created a need for government subsidies, leading to dependence on the government."

Corruption and the Bureaucracy

To the 70–80 per cent of India that is rural, bureaucracy means dealing with the lineman, patwari, thanedar and tehsildar from birth to death. To them the IAS and IPS means nothing. The oppression and suppression of them has not changed since ages.

Lip-service and double-talk has become the trademark of our politicians and bureaucrats. They have realised that instead of taking adversarial positions to fight for justice, it would be more convenient to cooperate with each other. This arrangement is not only beneficial, but helps them protect one another when they get into trouble. The bureaucracy, at one time, guarded and protected the public from wrong-doings of the local politicians. Today, however, they have become a wall that insulates the corrupt and saves them from being answerable to the people.

There is something unique about the Indian bureaucracy. As long as they are in positions of authority and power, getting things done

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is not a big problem. But once they retire, they find out how ineffective and unfair the system has been which was being run by them. Were they ignorant or indifferent to the definition of fairness while in service? If they were ignorant, that is incompetence. If they were indifferent, that is absolute selfishness. In either case, they did not earn their salary but were given charity. As parasites they drained the system. Now they call it unfair, because they are at its receiving end. How come the definition of fairness changed overnight?

The Crisis of Credibility

Law must regulate the regulators who have vast authority with little accountability – their selection process inspires little confidence, and redressal for their commissions is elusive. In a nation where you see parasites in action, politicians plunder, religious fanatics murder, criminals go unpunished, bureaucrats carry out illegal orders, the constitutional spirit is violated by those in power, the police torture the weak and to unscrupulous businessmen profit is more important than social responsibility.

Effective governance has enough checks and balances, to facilitate good governance.

Obsolete and archaic laws could easily save close to 50 per cent of resources being wasted right now.

According to N. Vittal, India ranks amongst the top three countries of the world in terms of arable land and milk production. However, our yield in foodcrops is only 30 per cent of the world standard, which shows that we have room for 70 per cent improvement in productivity that would result in greater prosperity and employment.

While much attention is paid to official corruption, the private sector, leading business corporations, professionals and NGOs are no exceptions either. "In the hierarchy of corruption, India ranks eleventh most corrupt country out of 12 Asian countries. The ranking of the 12 Asian nations, undertaken by the Political

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Economic Risk Consultancy in 2001 is as follows:

Country	2001
Singapore	01 (0.83)
Hong Kong	03 (3.77)
Japan	02 (2.50)
Malaysia	04 (6.0)
Taiwan	04 (6.0)
South Korea	06 (7.0)
Philippines	09 (9.0)
Thailand	08 (8.55)
China	07 (7.88)
Vietnam	12 (9.75)
India	11 (9.67)
Indonesia	11 (9.67)
Sample size	12"

The governments of Singapore and Hong Kong are the most transparent in Asia.[1]

Trust and Credibility

The Best Bakery case has been transferred to Maharashtra. Can the Supreme Court give an assurance that justice would be delivered in Maharashtra? Does that mean that each time there is a communal case in which the witness is from a different community, the case would be transferred to another state? Why can't citizens be guaranteed justice in their own home states?

What is a relationship based on? Think of one's personal relationships for a moment. Is it possible to have a relationship with someone you don't trust? After being attacked once by a mugger, we think twice about going alone in the street. Once robbed, we think twice about leaving the door open. **A single betrayal leads to the loss of trust.** Isn't it true that your best relationships are with people you trust the most? The same principle

[1] Jon S.T. Quah, *Curbing Corruption in Asia.*
Source: PERC, 'Corruption in Asia in 2001', Eastern Universities Press,p.3.

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applies to a business that sells products and services. People will buy from businesses that they trust the most and from societies and countries that are trustworthy.

DIVIDE AND RULE

We blame the British for their "divide and rule" policy. Were we not divided even before the British came to India? Could they have conquered India if we were not divided to begin with? "Divide and Rule" turned a mere trading company into the emperors of India. The biggest traitors are some of our own politicians who play the caste game and weaken the nation, only to strengthen their own position. Today, state issues have become more important than national issues. Even the so-called rational citizens are swayed by provocative emotional appeals by selfish politicians. Crooked politicians use every tool, including, but not limited to language, religion and even river water resources as a tool to create hatred between citizens of two states. They hide their non-performance by blaming the influx of people from other states for inadequate infrastructure and lack of job opportunities for locals, thereby creating further hatred. They create artificial problems as a solution to real problems. They do not realise that if the nation is weak, no matter how strong they are individually, they will be destroyed.

A man was transferred from one town to another. He went looking for a temple and found one on the street corner. But the priest, somehow found out that the man belonged to a different caste. Being a prejudiced person, he tactfully tried to discourage the man from entering the temple. The man could sense that he was not welcome. To soften the blow, the priest tried to dissuade him, saying, "Go back tonight. Talk to God. And see what he has to say. Then, decide if this temple is the

The man left. The next day, he came to the temple again. This
right one for you."

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time, the priest asked him, "Did you speak to God last night?" The man replied, "Of course." The priest asked, "So, what did God say?" The man answered, "God told me – 'don't even try to enter that temple. Since the time, they built it 35 years ago, they haven't allowed me to enter the temple. How do you think they're going to allow you?' "

Mandal Divide and Rule

"India stands divided in the name of social justice. This innovative script of a second partition was written by a social engineer called Vishwanath Pratap Singh, who has stretched the limits of affirmative action to include more castes in the net of reservation. Is this the death of merit, or a state-built crutch to aid the socially dispossessed? North India erupts to reply and the fault lines of Indian society come into sharp focus. India still continues to be one nation where reservation has become an eternal formula for salvation, making the path for the meritorious, more difficult. As a nation progresses, the list of the dispossessed should reflect the factor and shrink. Here, it grows, as does the nation. Here, even the privileged struggle to be categorised as underprivileged and no political party has shown the courage to be different."[2]

Reservations of Constituencies

Reservations of constituencies do not help local politicians too much, because they also have to depend heavily on the locally dominant groups for their political survival.

The quota system has become an integral part of the political game, with no thought being spared for the end results of this recklessness – the stretching of reservations. National interest has clearly been overruled by politics.

[2] 'Flame of Discontent', *India Today*, 18 August 2003.

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WHERE DO WE STOP?

Just to gain political mileage, some politicians want to extend reservations to the private sector also.

According to a survey conducted by *The Times of India*, reported in the paper on 27 June 2004, 94 per cent of the respondents said that reservations should not be extended to the private sector.

Starting from Andhra Pradesh recently, the reservation for Muslims became a reality. Regardless of the reservation percentages, the fact that this has been greeted by silence from all political parties is alarming. Appeasement continues at the cost of the nation. What could be a greater tragedy? Religion based quota is not only an appeasement, but also a betrayal of the Constitution. It is a national tragedy. Why should a society be divided on birth rather than merit? Our founding forefathers introduced reservations on a time-bound basis. The direction it is taking could lead to a tragedy of India being divided again.

Ragging on Caste Lines in Andhra Pradesh

"Ragging raised its ugly head once again on the V.R. Siddhartha Engineering College premises. And this time on caste lines. Tension ran high when a group of students were harassed by students of a particular caste."[3]

From Chakwara to Jhajjar

"Atrocities on Dalits are not a new phenomenon, despite the silence of historical records. The killing of five Dalits near Jhajjar, in Haryana on October 16, falls in the first category. The mob here showed no mercy, because of a perception that Dalits are to be treated worse than animals. After the incident, instead of ordering an inquiry into it, the authorities ordered the post-mortem of the cow instead – as if the life of a cow is more precious than that of

[3] 'Flame of Discontent', *India Today,* 18 August 2003.

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five human beings. This is the insensitivity with which Dalit atrocities are approached. The second incidence, which occurred at Chakwara near Jaipur when Dalits were denied access to the water tank and temple on September 22 lest they defile both – belongs to the second category.

While the atrocities of the second kind are becoming increasingly prevalent, it is disturbing to note that the total number of cases of atrocities on the Dalits has been multiplying by the day precisely because the traditional kind of atrocities have not withered away."[4]

Dalits Convert in Grief, Anger

"About 80 Dalits, including family members and relatives of five Dalits lynched by villagers in Jhajjar on October 15, converted to Buddhism, Islam and Christianity in a bylane next to Ravi Das Mandir in Gurgaon on Sunday."[5]

Some people want equal opportunity, while others want equality of outcome. Our objective should be to bring about equal opportunity, which means that each person has an equal opportunity to become unequal. Each person then, has the chance to go beyond his Key Result Area and reach for the skies. THAT IS FAIRNESS.

Divide and Keep Dividing

Burma was separated from India in 1937. India and Pakistan were formed in 1947. This is recent history, of merely the past 70 years. If it was not for Sardar Patel, India might not have been divided into not just two territories, but possibly 200 units. What was done by Sardar Patel is being undone by traitors today. How? *All the new states that are being created are on the lines of caste and language.* How many more times do we need to divide India? New states are being assembled from older ones, in the name of better administration. In reality, bureaucracy has multiplied

[4] Vivek Kumar, *The Indian Express*, 28 October 2002.
[5] Akshay Mukul, *The Times of India*, 28 October 2002.

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many times more, perpetuating regionalism and casteism at the expense of the nation.

Nani Palkhiwala once said that the way class-wars and caste-wars are being waged in India, we would see another divided India. What painful words! Isn't it sad? Don't we ever want to learn?

Why can't we see the writing on the wall?

How Low is Low?

A few years ago while conducting a programme in Orissa, I mentioned, "By our thought process, we can either elevate ourselves as good human beings towards divinity or sink below to the level of beasts. And whenever human beings stoop to the levels of animals, they behave not like animals, but much worse." As I finished, one person got up and said in a very disturbed tone, "We've gone down below the level of beasts." I asked him, "Why do you say that?" He replied, "One of my family members passed away. It was a police case. We cleared all the documents and paid all the hospital bills. However, the two of them (police and hospital) conniving with each other would not release the dead body for us to be able to perform the last rites. And here, there were 20 grieving family members outside, waiting, to perform the last rites." The police and the medical authorities did not release the body till they got their pound of flesh. When I heard this, I felt:

1. Disbelief
2. Shame
3. Hurt
4. Anger.

My response was, "I don't believe you. I have never heard of this kind of thing before and I don't think anyone would stoop so low." I asked the audience if anyone of them had heard anything of this sort. Guess what? Pretty much, all hands went up. They said it had happened either to them, or their relative, or a friend,

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or that they knew someone who had similarly been a victim. The final conclusion was this was not localised. This is a common practice all over our Nation. This is an epidemic behaviour in India.

What a Culture!

I was left speechless, thinking, is this what our centuries-old culture has led us to? And if it has brought us below the level of beasts, I am not proud of it. I am embarrassed.

We hide behind high-sounding words like, "We are compassionate people", and yet resort to doing just the opposite, as in the above example. Is this compassion or perversion?

We call ourselves tolerant people, and yet when we see this kind of injustice happening around us, we turn our faces and walk away. Is this tolerance or cowardice? We have adopted the culture of silence as a result of our indifference.

Indignities, it seems, do not bother or provoke us. We accept gross violations of human rights, misgovernance, corruption, injustice, and tyranny without protest. Does acceptance of injustice mean tolerance, lack of humanity or apathy in our culture? Is it *ahimsa* or cowardice to bow one's head to tyranny?

There are limits beyond which tolerance and forbearance cease to be virtues. When evil forces unite, it is time for the good to join hands and become a force. When honest citizens become soldiers and take to the streets to fight for a cause, who can stop this army?

Some people apologise because they mean it, while others do so just to buy time. Forgiveness implies humanity and compassion to those who sincerely realise and accept their mistake, with the intent of not repeating it. Those who make mistakes just because they know they will be forgiven, are crooks.

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Citizens or Subjects?

I don't know if there can be anything like a feudal democracy. It seems that there is; therefore, we take a very tolerant view of the misbehaviour of our leaders. This is because we live by the philosophy, "the King can do no wrong."

PROTECTORS OR PREDATORS?

In the commercial world, when a person makes a promise and doesn't keep it, he is considered to have committed a fraud, punishable under law. He is someone who has committed a punishable crime. But when a politician makes a promise, merely to get votes, and does not keep his commitment, what's the penalty? None. Why don't we play by the same set of rules for everyone? Regarding a politician who does not keep his word, somebody may contend that people would punish him by not voting him back to power after five years. My question is – aren't five years long enough time in the hands of a monkey to destroy the nation?

If an ordinary citizen does not file a claim against a debtor within three years, the "statute of limitation" applies and the creditor loses his right to claim. However, it is not unusual for people to get horrific surprises of bills after decades from the government, making claims on people after they are dead or people who received notices after the due dates and are then being penalised for it. A citizen could go to jail, for not responding to the notice that he did not receive or received after the due date. Why doesn't the same statute of limitations apply to the government? If citizens were to conduct their affairs like the government, they would probably be in jail forever and would never qualify for bail. For the number of people who die because of poor governance, the government is not charged for murder, whereas its citizens would have been, under the same circumstances. If a citizen does not pay taxes on

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time, he is penalized with monetary fines and jail but nothing happens when he is supposed to get a refund and does not get it for twenty years. Why isn't the administration taken to jail? Is this governance or is it holding the country to ransom? Is this not the government terrorising its own citizens? What kind of justice is this? Does it not amount to mental and physical torture of the country's citizens? Is this our tryst with destiny?

Our political values have plunged so low, that it doesn't take courage to do wrong; it takes a lot of courage to do right.

APPEASEMENT: DOES IT SOLVE ANY PROBLEM?

A visitor at the zoo was surprised to see a label outside a cage, that said, "PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE". Inside the cage were a lion and a sheep, sitting quietly. He asked the zoo director, "How did you achieve this miracle?" The director replied, "We just add a new lamb to the cage everyday."

History is witness to countless incidents where appeasement failed to solve any problems. Appeasement is one of the chief reasons behind what historians consider the greatest failure of human intelligence and organisation leading to the Second World War.

Closer home, Indian mythology is replete with instances where appeasement failed to offer a solution. Were Lord Rama and Lord Krishna warmongers? Lord Rama exhausted all peaceful options to get back his kidnapped wife. His ambassador of peace, Hanuman, was insulted and tortured by Ravana. Left with no other option, he went to war with Ravana and killed him and burnt his kingdom to ashes. Did he have a choice? Lord Krishna's countless efforts to appease the Kauravas and make them grant the exiled Pandavas their just demands, proved futile. Only a war that annihilated the entire Kaurava clan, was the final solution. Even in the *Bhagvad Gita*, Lord Krishna's advice to Arjuna on the

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battlefield, was about the necessity and righteousness of the fight for justice. A big question therefore arises: is it necessary some time to destroy the sinner in order to destroy sin?

When Guru Gobind Singh partook of *amrit* and administered it to his five disciples, he implied, that the Khalsa shall not only be war-like, but shall also sweeten the lives of those he has chosen to serve. However, Guru Gobind Singh advocated the use of force only if it was absolutely essential and that too, for a good cause. The Guru's message was that physical prowess was as sacred as spiritual sensitivity and both played a significant role in our lives.

Here's a story to show that even in this day and age, appeasement doesn't hold water.

A young boy came home from school with one eye bleeding. His mother asked him, "What happened?" The son replied, "Johnny is a big bully. He hit me." Mama said, " Son, you should be friends with him and make an effort to win his heart. I'll bake a cake for you tomorrow so that you can give it to him as a gesture of friendship." The son did as he was told. He came home happy that day, without any injury.

On the third day after the incident, the boy came home bleeding again. This time, he told his mother that Johnny had roughed him up once more. "Didn't you give him a cake two days ago, and become friends?" asked his bewildered mother. "Yes, but that was yesterday. Today he wants another one," the boy replied.

The moral of the story is:

1. Facts don't go away if you just ignore them.
2. Problems don't cease to exist, because you don't address them.
3. A problem when not addressed, only compounds itself.
4. Compromising on values does not represent flexibility.

Neither appeasement, nor hatred solves problems. Solutions lie in courage and magnanimity.

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Appeasement is like believing that if you feed the lion enough meat, he will someday turn vegetarian. It has never happened, nor shall it ever happen.

All through history, barbarians through their ruthlessness have disturbed peaceful existence from time to time.

Ahimsa and non-violence are important, provided we understand the meaning of these words. Wouldn't bowing down to a bully or an oppressor, be called appeasement?

> *I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour, than that she should in a cowardly manner become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonour.*
>
> – Mahatma Gandhi

Senior Policemen also Get a Cut from *Hafta*!

"NEW DELHI: The Delhi Police's very own multi-crore racket of extortion from roadside vendors and shopkeepers has many beneficiaries, beat constable upwards. The booty could be shared by officers ranked even higher than a station house officer."[6]

SHO-led Harassment for Refusal to Pay *Hafta*

"Constable Suresh from the Mayapuri police station went to the shop of the petitioner and demanded Rs 500 as regular payment made to the police station by all shopkeepers in the area. Goel submitted that he refused to pay, and on May 12 at around 7.15 p.m., sub-inspector Mehar Singh visited his shop along with constable Suresh and forcibly took away his younger brother Pramod Goel and their domestic helper. The SHO, according to the petitioner, took out a country-made pistol from his drawer and told the petitioner that the pistol would be planted on him and a case registered.

[6] Rahul Chhabra, *The Times of India*, 15 April 2002.

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The SHO allegedly demanded Rs 50,000 for letting them off the hook. After much haggling, according to Goel, Sapra settled for Rs 20,000. The cops allegedly allowed his brother Pramod to go home to fetch the money, and all along, made Satish Goel sit on the floor with his hands handcuffed behind them and showered him with abuses. Goel submitted that the cops made him sign some blank sheets of paper and after payment of Rs 15,000, they let him go."[7]

If this is not mafia in uniform, then what is?

If an ordinary citizen were to indulge in such acts of commissions and omissions as the government indulges in, he would be condemned for life as a common criminal. If an individual or a private business functioned the way the government functions, they would land in jail. Why is it not the other way round?

When people in positions of power oppress the innocent, it is called organised crime. The innocent have to pay a heavy price for not giving into extortion.

We must distinguish between partners in crime and victims of crime.

If I apply for a licence and bribe someone, thereby depriving a more deserving person, what do I become? A partner in crime. The person who stands to lose, becomes a victim. The example mentioned above, was just about a licence. Let us talk of a life-and-death situation.

If you happen to pick up an accident victim, who had been lying unattended and bleeding on the street and take him to the hospital, no one will bother to take care of him. However, if you bribe some hospital staff members, they take him on right away. Your principles tell you that you will not bribe. But the question is – would you let this person bleed to death or would you rather

[7] Gaurav C. Sawant, *The Indian Express,* 14 August 1998.

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bribe? I would bribe. Legally, I just became a criminal by bribing, I broke the law, but ethically, I just saved a life. Am I therefore, a partner in crime or am I a victim of crime? Most people would agree that I am a victim and not a partner in crime. I feel very strongly that 99.9 per cent of Indians are honest. They are not partners but have become victims of crime.

Gone are the days when corruption made way for speed money. Today, it is extortion.

Once addressing a large group, a young man narrated his life story and asked me, based on the circumstances that he went through, what I would have done if I was in his position. The story goes as follows:

A young graduate from a middle-class family, whose father was a teacher, was taught great values of integrity and hard-work. "Delay, but not denial in the path of justice" is what he was taught throughout. After graduation, he borrowed money to set up a small factory. To get started, he applied for an electric connection and was asked to bribe for the same. His factory closed even before it started. Sticking to his father's teachings, he refused to pay bribe. He went to higher authorities with the resolve to bring the culprit to task, but without success who were even more corrupt. He decided to fight the system and went from one level to the next higher level, with no success and eventually, he thought he would knock on the doors of the judiciary to get justice. He filed a suit, but the summonses were not even served for about a year or a year and a half. In the meantime, his creditors started hounding him for money. He began avoiding their calls. Not only that, his own attorney started avoiding him because he could not pay the fees anymore. The family did not even have enough to purchase medicines when one of the members fell ill. He had no assets to sell and no income to feed his family. He went through all this only because he wanted to live up to his father's ideals. Now, he started thinking, "where do I go from here? I have only two

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choices – either I and my kids start begging on the streets, or become part of the system." He remembered Mahatma Gandhi's words, "There are no principles on an empty stomach." He decided to become part of the system. He called all the parties requesting them to give him three to six months time to organise everything. He bribed his way through and through and got started. He got his life back in order. He asked me, "What would you have done if you were in my position?"

My reply was, "exactly what you did." I explained to him the difference between partners in crime and victims of crime. I told him of an incident where a corporation's very honest senior executive was kidnapped in the North-East and extortion money was paid to get him released. "You think the money was paid by cheque and they took a tax deduction." I added further, "there was a time when fictitiously inflated bills would come in and a phone call would follow stating that the bill would be adjusted if you paid 10 per cent or 15 per cent under hand. If you refused, your electricity supply would be disconnected and you would be left without any electricity or if you want to contest then you had to pay the entire amount with a note saying, paid under protest and then contest. What are your choices? Suppose you had a sick person on a deathbed or you did not have the money, what could you do? Question is when you pay under protest, is it speed-money or extortion?" I asked him, "Did you pay willingly or was it under protest?" The answer was very clear. Welcome to the real world! Is this an isolated instance or has it become an epidemic in India and a national shame. Is that the Indian dream or nightmare?

If you take a look at Gandhi's life and you realise that he broke every British law. Gandhi was then, the biggest criminal! Anyone who breaks a law, technically-speaking, commits a crime. He told the British, "You make the law and I'll break it." Gandhi said something very important – beyond the law of the land, there is a law of humanity, which is way, way above the law of land.

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Mahatma Gandhi, at an address in Madras in 1920 said,

"*Cooperation is our duty only as long as the Government protects our honour. Non-cooperation is an equal duty when the Government instead of protecting us, robs us of our honour.*"

Empathy v. *Apathy*

It is not necessary that new ideas always give rise to great revolutions. An old idea is sometimes given a new form.

The Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919 was not just a tragedy for Punjab, but a national one.

The Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy Repeated, But not by the British this time

I would like to recall a recent incident that I witnessed. I came out of a hotel and was caught in a huge traffic jam. Some people had blocked the road in protest against the lack of electricity and water in their village for four days. In spite of making repeated requests to the concerned authorities, no action was taken. There was a mixed reaction from people sitting in the car for hours. Some said, "Why are we being penalised for the fact that these villagers do not have water?" Some opined that they should take the matter to a court of law. Some said that they were getting late for a dinner meeting. However, there were a few who came forward with a very different reaction. They said, "What would I have done if I was in their place? If my children had no water for four days, wouldn't I have done the same thing? If the villagers are in the right and we have the facts at hand, we must support them in their struggle. At that moment, we saw police officials surround the protestors. One officer asked a lady leading the protest, to clear the road.

He warned the protestors not to take the law into their own hands. He further suggested that the protestors should take legal action

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and call the concerned authority for redressal. The lady replied that she had spoken to all the authorities and that they all had said, "Everything is in process and action will be taken in due course – amenities would be restored shortly." But in reality, nothing was done. They were, hence, left with no choice, but take to the streets in protest.

The response of any concerned human being in a position of authority, ought to have been:

- To apologise for the inconvenience.
- Summon the concerned authorities and get the situation rectified.
- If none of these recourses were possible, then arrange for tankers of water to be supplied to the afflicted people.
- Get to the root of the problem.
- To find out if there was negligence on the part of the authorities concerned, and hold them accountable and penalise them.

But that was not what the officer did. His response was:

1. Who are you to take the law into your hands?
2. If you do not move away right now, we shall have no choice but to use force and lathicharge you and clear the streets.

Just analyse the situation:

- Is this called taking the law in your own hands?
- What would the police officers have done if they were in the villagers' position and their children had no water to drink for four days in spite of repeated complaints with the authorities?
- Should you lathicharge innocent people who are only asking for water, one of the basic amenities? Aren't they only asking for what they are entitled to? What difference is there between this behaviour *versus* the British when they mowed down hundreds of innocents in *Jallianwala Bagh*?

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Peaceful protest against injustice is the democratic right of every citizen.

DILEMMA

When the protector becomes the predator, what choice does a common citizen have? What does he do? He can either commit suicide or pick up the gun. If he commits suicide, he is considered a coward. If he picks up the gun, he is branded a criminal.

"I travelled with Deputy Commandant Raghunandan Sharma, the most highly decorated officer in the Indian police. 'They're not called dacoits here,' he said. 'They're called *bhagis*, or rebels. Every village wants one of its members to join a gang so that the village is protected. And it's often said in the ravines that if a man is blessed enough to have three sons, one will join the uniformed service, the armed forces or the police; one will stay home and till the land; and the third will become a dacoit. The first will thus give the family legal authority, the second the assurance that the land will not go to waste, and the third will guarantee the social prestige of the family.' 'Why does someone become a dacoit, other than prestige?" I asked Sharma after we had returned to our car and commenced speeding along the road. He replied without hesitation, "For the majority of dacoits, land is the key: they fight for it, kill for it, die for it, in the ravines. Also, some join for reasons of revenge: if the system gives you no justice, the- you take justice into your own hands. And, I am very sorry to say, many become dacoits because of the high-handedness of the police: police beatings, police inefficiency, fear of the police."

Every reason he cited applied to Phoolan Devi."[8]

Doesn't Phoolan Devi represent the hollowness of the ugly social system which has perpetrated atrocities on the lower caste since ages?

[8] Mary Anne Weaver, India's Bandit Queen, A saga of revenge – and making of a legend of "the real India".

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What Then, Does a Person Do?

When protectors of law break the law for personal gains and promotions, what does a common citizen do? If the common man takes recourse to the legal system, he finds, the system doesn't function adequately. If he turns to higher authorities they turn a deaf ear. When the legal system becomes corrupt, the police become predators.

Statistics show that India's average conviction rate is only 6 per cent.[9] Western societies, on the other hand, have a much higher conviction rate.

Victimisation of the innocent is called 'vulture-culture'.

If victimisation is not vulture-culture, then what is? We are either victims or know someone who has been a victim of the corrupt 'system'. When dishonesty becomes a way of life, we don't spare even our kids. We cheat on our spouses, our customers, our employers and eventually our country and society, thus depriving our children of a great heritage.

Each time a man stands up for an ideal,
or acts to improve the lot of others,
or strikes out against injustice,
he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope,
and crossing each other from a million
different centers of energy and daring,
those ripples build a current that can
sweep down the mightiest walls of
oppression and resistance.

– Robert Kennedy, 1966

[9] Central Vigilance Commission.

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7

Third World or Third Class?

A caring citizen once planted a mango tree which grew and bore fruits. Everyone in the community enjoyed eating its fruits. One day, a termite started gnawing at the very roots of the tree. Instead of eating the fruits, it ate the roots! Soon, the tree was hollowed out and it died. The whole community was then deprived of the fruits.

The nature of termites is such that neither they themselves will eat the fruits, nor will they let anyone else eat them.

Every society has its own share of termites. The only difference between progressive and degenerating societies is that in degenerating societies, termites go unchecked, their clan becomes bigger and more destructive. This only happens when the guardian of the tree stops being vigilant.

There are some behaviour patterns – both positive and negative – that are universally prevalent.

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All negative behaviour patterns act as termites in every society.

Why are some nations labelled as Third World? It is not necessarily because of their stage of economic development, but because many of them behave as if they were third-class countries. They build a negative brand equity for themselves.

Whenever we evaluate a situation, we must adopt a clinical approach, which is:

1. Examine
2. Diagnose
3. Prescribe.

The prescription is only as good as the correct examination and the right diagnosis. If we cannot be honest to ourselves, why go through this process of evaluation?

There is a big difference between being a good person and a good citizen. People who shut their eyes and ears to reality, simply invite their own pain and destruction.

There are five behaviour patterns that hurt our society:

1. Ego
2. Jealousy
3. Indifference
4. A fatalistic attitude
5. The Hindu concept of *prayashchit* or atonement.

EGO

There are two kinds of egos that people have.

1. The know-it-all ego.
2. The fragile ego

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The Know-It-All Ego

People, who have a know-it-all attitude, are forever trying to put others down. They look down on everyone around them. Each decision that they take is more towards satisfying their own ego, than making sense of a situation to provide a solution to it. The question is, why does a human being treat another human being as an inferior? This is because, there are people in this world who feel good when others feel bad. This is called sadistic behaviour. They don't think highly of themselves but certainly think poorly of you.

The Fragile Ego

A person with a fragile ego would take anything you say, personally and get hurt. This is being touchy, not sensitive behaviour. Sensitivity is positive, whereas touchiness is negative. For people with a fragile ego, everything becomes a prestige issue. They get offended and insulted by small things. They not only have a hard time apologising for their mistakes, but they are also instinctively very unforgiving of other people's honest mistakes too.

This behaviour is typical of the Indian politician. **When they win, they take revenge: when they lose, they mud-sling.**

How do the above-mentioned egos affect our lives?

1. Dual Personality: Have you noticed that when at work, the very people who cringe in the presence of their bosses, suddenly become bullies and oppressors as soon as they are with their juniors?
2. They wear a mask and pretend to be what they are not.
3. They massage their superiors' egos and expect others to massage their egos.
4. They are sycophants in the outer world and domineering tyrants in their inner worlds (families).

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The Nouveau Riche Culture

The breed of the *nouveau riche* is a recent phenomenon. As such, there is nothing wrong with being *nouveau riche* or making new money. But the terminology in popular usage, denotes that a person has made millions but his values are nowhere close to his bank balance. He's made money by hook or by crook and he exerts himself to make his presence felt even when not solicited.

Through his behaviour, he makes sure that people know, 'he has arrived.' He tells them through his mannerisms, 'You cannot afford to ignore me anymore.' He flaunts his newly-acquired possessions to gain attention.

Let's take an example.

Sunil celebrates his son's sixteenth birthday at a five star hotel, orders a six-foot cake, hands over the keys of a Maruti car to him and says, "Son, your dad loves you. My dad could not do this for me but I will make it up to you. You will not be deprived of all the luxuries that I didn't have. Take this car, son, and go have a great time. Here's a mobile phone too. If you run into a problem, just call daddy. I have loads of powerful contacts and even if I didn't have them, I have enough money to buy over powerful people."

The young punk goes out into the world with his dad's approval. He drives around like a maniac, terrorising the whole town while telling himself, "You watch out, because I'm not going to."

Another *nouveau riche* punk in the meantime, overtakes this one and they glare at each other like two dogs from across the street, almost growling at each other (if they could!).

The second punk's expression says, "I've scored points on you and I'm better than you." The first guy's fragile ego stops him from swallowing this insult and he thinks, "Oh, that's what you think? I'll show you." He floors the accelerator, hits a tree, and leaves planet earth. In simple words, HE IS DEAD.

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"Thanks *nouveau riche* dad, I needed values but you gave me a car!"

Most of our road accidents are ego-related ones. Typically in India, when people drive their cars on the highway, they drive right in the middle of the road. I wonder why they don't drive in their lanes, like it is done in most other countries? If another vehicle drives in from the opposite side, both wait either foolishly or nervously (out of sheer ego) for the other person to move to one side so that they can pass straight through.

Nowhere have I seen this kind of traffic misbehaviour. One driver flashes the headlights to signal, "I'm coming in fast, you give way." The other driver, also racing in, flashes his lights twice, signaling, "I'm coming in faster, you better move to the side." The first guy flashes thrice this time, "I asked you to move first." The second guy does this four times, "I'm driving a bigger vehicle than yours. I have a truck. I'm the King of the road. Might is right. You move." The first driver now, flashes five times, "You idiot! I'm coming in fast and also have no brakes. You move!" In this exchange of non-verbal misconduct, they collide, leave planet earth, meet upstairs and finally, become statistics!

Am I exaggerating or does this happen all the time on our roads? It might sound hilarious, but for the family that has lost a loved one, it is a tragedy, not statistics.

JEALOUSY

Jealousy says that people are not as bothered with their own problems, as they are with other people's successes. This means, people don't want to elevate themselves. All they want to do is pull others down. People who are by nature jealous, stab you in the back. Later, they sympathise with you.

Did the Hindu gods also behave like mere mortals by being jealous? Lord Indra sent the dancing beauty, Menaka to seduce Rishi

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Vishwamitra in order to disrupt the latter's meditation. Isn't this jealousy that stems from insecurity? Lord Indra did not make an effort to lift himself up, but wanted to pull Vishwamitra down.

Our insecure politicians, even when handed power on a platter, would still fight for the platter!

FATALISTIC ATTITUDE

"*Future leads the willing and drags the unwilling.*"

The priesthood manipulates the innocent and the ignorant, in the name of religion, hell and heaven by creating a fear psychosis. Biographies and autobiographies of great spiritual leaders like Guru Nanak and Vivekananda clarify that it is our weaknesses, not fate, that lead us to become victims of conmen disguised as godmen.

People, by and large, are content with their fate. People who have a fatalistic attitude think, "Whatever is written in my stars and in my horoscope has to happen. I am helpless. Everything is predestined. I am only a puppet in the bigger scheme of the universe." These kind of people wait for things to happen – they never make them happen.

An astrologer was once walking along, looking up and gazing at the stars. He suddenly found himself in a ditch. A man passing by said, "What's the good in looking at the stars when you can't see what's in front of you."

History shows very clearly that anyone who means to achieve anything in life, does it in spite of problems, not in the absence of them. Those who don't want to do it, even if you gave them everything in life, they would still not do it.

There are enough role models within India to support this statement.

On 6 June 1981, Sudha Chandran was returning from a

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pilgrimage in Trichy with her parents when the bus in which they were travelling met with an accident. Sudha's parents were injured and she fractured her right femur. The doctors sutured a minor cut without cleaning the wound. Soon, gangrene set in. Sudha learnt that her leg had to be amputated.

Sudha's whole world came crashing down. She kept repeating, "I don't want to live anymore." Much later, she met Dr P K Sethi, who had pioneered the Jaipur Foot. The first thing that she asked him was, "Will I be able to dance?" On Dr Sethi's assurances, Sudha finally agreed to have the artificial Jaipur Foot fixed to her amputated leg. The going got very rough in the beginning. Sudha's stump would bleed and be sore for days together. But she never gave up. She trained with her dance guru and her physiotherapists. She painstakingly learnt to dance with her artificial leg.

On 28 January 1984 Sudha gave her first public performance in Mumbai.

It was not easy for Sudha, but she survived and said, "I firmly believe that trust and faith in God, yourself and your family can help you beat any problem." Sudha's message to everyone is: *It is not the amputee who has to be rehabilitated; it is the society that has to be rehabilitated and made more sensitive.*

The Railways Blame it on *Rahu*

"The last Chairman of the Railway Board had blamed the death of 120 passengers in the Rajdhani Express accident on Pakistan's ISI. Now, responsible officials in the board are citing the positioning of planets, Rahu, *nakshatras*, Unidentified Flying Objects, tornados and sudden inexplicable radioactivity as the reasons for four major accidents in 180 days.

As if this was not enough, senior officials, in all seriousness, stress the need of conducting a *havan* to 'manage' the 'bad phase' in

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the ministry. They, of course, fail to address the basic issues like taking action against officials in the Secunderabad division that has seen three major accidents in the last seven months."[1]

In the year 2003, there was an astrologer's conference in Jaipur where it was predicted that a 13-month 'inauspicious' period was coming up, during which weddings and other important functions should not be held. Realising the potential economic loss, the attending pundits quickly reduced the 'inauspicious' period to four months.

By no standards am I an expert in astrology, palmistry, numerology, *vaastu*, feng shui, etc. Over 20,000 people have attended my programmes globally, and the following questions have been raised by them from time to time and which still remain unanswered:

1. False horoscopes can be made very easily and it is a common practice. That being the case, what is its credibility?
2. It is said that time of birth is vital. What is the actual criteria – the time of conception or the time of birth? By whose watch do we see the time of birth? Is it the doctor's watch, the nurse's watch or the hospital's watch? Have you ever seen two watches showing the same time to the last second? In the villages, people calculate time based on dusk and dawn and get horoscopes made, based on the same.
3. We often hear that a large number of people have been killed in an earthquake or a flood. Does it mean that all those people who died, were born under the same inauspicious stars that snuffed out their lives?
4. How can it be explained, that the marriages of the priests' own children fall apart, in spite of their horoscopes having being tallied?
5. If the horoscopes of the bride and the groom need to be so religiously matched for a successful marriage, then in the case

[1] *The Times of India*, 5 July 2003.

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of joint families, shouldn't the horoscopes be tallied between entire families? Horoscopes are after all, supposed to spell out the adjustment quotient in a marriage. Tallying horoscopes of a bride with her future mother-in-law and sisters-in-law should, therefore, be just the right thing to do as it is all a matter of adjustment and compatibility.

There is a couplet:

Muni Vashishth so pandit gyaani
Likh likh lagan dharae
Dashratha maran, Sita haran
Van van Ram phire

It is said that the legendary sage Vashishth matched the horoscopes of Rama and Sita after consulting the *shastras*. What were the results?

King Dashratha died soon after, Sita was kidnapped by Ravana and Rama was left wandering in the woods!

People who are fatalistic in their attitude, are essentially shirkers. They blame everything on destiny. They keep visiting astrologers, palmists, numerologists and tarot card readers, looking for short-cuts and easy answers. These people become victims of conmen who are self-proclaimed godmen.

There are preachers and godmen who profess that from birth to death, a person's life is predestined. At the same time, they also advertise as follows:

"Turn disappointment into hope. Guaranteed results in 24 hours" – that's the headline which catches people's attention. Then they write:

1. "If you have a problem finding a job.
2. Not getting a promotion?
3. Not getting married?

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G.M. College of Education
Raipur, Bantalab
Jammu
Acc. No ....
Dated ....

4. Married and have no kids?
5. Facing problems with your mother-in-law?
6. Financial problems?
7. Court cases?

Send Rs 151 and see the results in 24 hours." What a contradiction!

Well, they certainly have solved their own financial problems in life and put others in deeper trouble!

INDIFFERENCE

This attitude proclaims loudly, "As long as it doesn't bother me, who cares?"

Indifference is the ultimate element in selfishness.

Who Destroys Society?

"It is never the ACTIVITY of the RASCALS that destroys a society, but always the INACTIVITY of the GOOD PEOPLE that does it."

What a paradox! If they were really good, would they be inactive? May be they are in effect the real rascals, but just labelled as 'good'.

A nation does not become great by shouting slogans. It becomes great when its citizens great feats.

Why are we hurting today? Not because we are helpless, but because we don't want to fight our own battles for our integrity – we want our neighbours to fight for us. We often hear that we need another Bhagat Singh today. Not in my house, but in my neighbour's – it's okay!

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THE HINDU CONCEPT OF *PRAYASHCHIT*

If a person is caught accepting bribe, and if a token punishment is imposed, the public seems to think that he should be forgiven because he has paid for his sin and should be given another chance.

A holy bath in the Ganga lends us a psychological feeling that we have been rid of all our past sins. Does this give us the licence to start all over again?

Offering of *dakshina* to priests is just a way of washing away one's sins. This eliminates the feeling of guilt or remorse and people are ready to commit their next crime. What the priests do in the meantime, is thrive on fear motivation and extortion.

We often justify a person's wrong-doing instead of challenging him. We find ourselves saying, "Even though his actions are bad, he is still good at heart." This is more of an escapist's behaviour rather than an honest one. It does not address the real issue. The question is, what good is being "good at heart", when one's actions are derogatory?

Citizens' Tolerance

One of the social roots of corruption in India can be traced to that aspect of Indian culture which is labelled as 'tolerance'. I wonder if it is more of cowardice, indifference and selfishness than tolerance. What is required is citizens' action – not a statutory Act. Hinduism teaches tolerance. There are numerous examples in our scriptures where sinners have been absolved. The sense of forgiveness and tolerance that the honest have, encourages the corrupt.

SOCIAL SERVICE AND POLITICS

Frequently, you hear people say, "I want to do social work, but I will not get involved in politics." I have a question for those who say this – how can you separate the two?

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Other times you hear people say, "I want to stay away from politics because politics is a dirty game." My answer is, there is no dirty game, there are only dirty players. That's all.

The air we breathe, the food we eat, the medicine we take, the water we drink, the education our children get is the result of politics. By not getting involved, we are already involved.

Bihar has emerged as a prime example of crime spreading its tentacles to all areas of politics.

"*'Bihar is burning', the Patna High Court was moved to say last Monday, taking note of kidnapping and extortion assuming 'alarming proportions'.*

Crime statistics have ceased to have any meaning in Bihar. They keep climbing daily if not hourly. Thousands of medium industry units and a much larger number of small-scale enterprises have closed shop in recent years."[2]

CHARITY AND PHILANTHROPY

An elderly lady in philanthropic spirits started feeding the hungry in the neighbourhood at a fixed time everyday. The woman of strong values arrived punctually everyday. One day, she arrived forty-five minutes past her normal time. Guess, what kind of a reception did she get? People were annoyed, angry and irritated. They reacted by snapping, "Why did you make us wait so long? We have been sitting hungry. We had to go to other places also." The lady was shocked beyond words. Instead of gratitude for the past and concern for the giver, there was hostility in them. Is this human nature? Does this happen in our real lives? Welcome to the real world. In the real world, some people would even bite the hand that feeds them.

What is the connection between charity and human dignity? It is

[2] *Hindustan Times,* 31 July 2003.

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our moral responsibility to help those in need. But helping the needy once in a while or helping the wrong person provides an incentive to them to remain in need. There is a distinction between the idle, lazy and the deserving poor. **There is a difference between social charity and social justice.** A privilege is different from a right.

You often hear people say, "I do not encourage wrong things. I am neutral." That's another paradox!

"If a citizen does not OPPOSE injustice or CRIME, then he is encouraging it."

If we are not part of the solution, then we are the problem.

DETACHMENT AND INDIFFERENCE

Our moral and societal decay are linked to our citizens' indifference and lack of courage to face reality. Many people who behave indifferently either out of ignorance or deviousness have the audacity to label it as spiritual detachment. It's not uncommon to hear people and even religious leaders say, "Rise above worldly things. Curtail your desires in life." They also say, "Good things shouldn't excite you, bad things shouldn't bother you. You need to attain a state of bliss." To attain the state of bliss, people have travelled to the jungles and the mountains. Can indifference in the guise of detachment provide a state of bliss?

"If INJUSTICE is happening to your neighbour and you can SLEEP, WAIT for your turn. You are NEXT."

Taking the path of least resistance makes both men and rivers crooked. It is not unusual to see the weak and wicked form alliances.

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Some things have bothered people who have served humanity. Racism bothered Gandhiji and that's why he fought against it. Misery bothered Mother Teresa and therefore, she served society. Ignorance bothered Swami Vivekananda, that's why he began to enlighten people. What kind of a human being is one, whose heart does not bleed upon seeing the state of the downtrodden? Such a being is nothing but INHUMAN.

IGNORANCE AND SUPERSTITION

Superstition is a particular opinion or practice based on a belief – actual or false. Various kinds of superstition prevail in different parts of the world. However, the intensity of its practice in India is a cause of great damage to society.

Ancient civilisations were dominated by the fear of natural disasters, like droughts, floods and famines. They used their creative energies in order to personify these forces as Gods. Such practices over time, turned into rituals and traditions.

We hear the television evangelists and other so-called religious preachers advocating renunciation of the world. If God is the creator, then renouncing God's creation amounts to renouncing the creator, doesn't it? Bible and many other scriptures say that "Man was created in His image". The reverse seems to be just as true. Why are the Indian, Japanese, Chinese, African God different? Man starts creating his own image and starts worshipping. Man writes all the scriptures and attributes them to God. It is man who builds all the churches and temples. Superstition turns into rituals. Rituals turn into religion. Religion turns into politics. Nobody knows who started what, but the priests keep collecting the cash permanently in the name of religion. Ignorance makes people superstitious and stick to false beliefs. One practises rituals and searches all around for God, not realising that God is within us and manifests Himself through our service to humanity.

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"The Akhil Bhartiya Andhashradha Nirmulan Samiti's (ABANS) President Mr Shyam Manav said there is a trend of celebrity or cult *tantriks* and gurus nowadays, who may not always be genuine. A lot of people are making money and exploiting the masses in the name of meditation and relaxation. If people have a problem, they prefer going to a godman rather than to a doctor. The godman blames the stars for the devotees' predicament and asks devotees to pay up for *pooja*."[3]

Guru Nanak stood up against the hollowness of meaningless rituals. He saw a man who stood waist-deep in running water, throwing water to the rising sun in the belief that it would quench the thirst of his ancestors. Guru Nanak started throwing water in the opposite direction. When questioned, he replied, "I am watering my fields." He was asked, "How far are your fields from here?" Guru Nanak said, "A few hundred miles." The man asked, "How can you water your fields, 500 miles from here?" Guru Nanak replied, "If you can offer water to your departed ancestors and it can reach Heaven, surely the water I throw, can reach my fields!"

Dump Little Gods for the One Big Reality

"This is a world of good versus evil. Contradictorily, wherever there is good, evil follows. Behind both good and evil, stands something which is yours, the real you, beyond every evil, and beyond every good too, and it is that which manifests itself as good or bad. Know that first, and then and then alone you will be a true optimist, for then, you will be able to control everything. This philosophy lays no responsibility on little gods; for you are the makers of your own fortunes. You make yourselves suffer, you make good and evil, and it is you who put your hands before your eyes and say it is dark. Remove your hands and see the light – you are effulgent, you are perfect already, from the very beginning."[4]

[3] *The Times of India*, 21 November 2003.
[4] Swami Vivekananda, 'Pathfinder', *Hindustan Times*, 9 January 2004.

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An ignorant man was driving with an astrologer by his side. They saw some cows sitting in the fields. The astrologer said, "That is a sign of rain, when you see a cow sitting in the field." A little later, they saw some cows standing. The astrologer said, "Standing cows is the sign of dry weather." A mile further, they saw half the cows sitting and half of them standing. The man asked the astrologer for his prediction. The astrologer confidently said, "Scattered showers."

There are people who hard-sell *vaastu* and feng-shui and find eager believers. Some people pull down their homes in order to conform to *vaastu* and feng-shui and incur large expenditures.

A superstitious man believed that five was his lucky number. One day, commuting to his place of work, in a train, he noticed that his seat number was 55 and it was in the fifth coach. His ticket was numbered 555. The train arrived at platform number five. On checking into a hotel, he was given room number 55 on the fifth floor. All this convinced him that that day was a lucky day for him and five was his lucky number. So, he decided to go to the races. He bet on horse number five. Keeping his fingers crossed, he awaited the results. Lo and behold, the horse finished fifth!

Superstition weakens a person mentally, spiritually and in many ways physically to.

An Orgy of Killing – That's What Some Festivals Have Become

"It's a day when snakes are supposed to be venerated. Ironically it is also the day when they die in their thousands, slow and painful deaths. The fifth day of Shravan is celebrated as Nagpanchami in Maharashtra.

All this is in the name of God. The things that we do under the tag of 'religion' are enough to make one wonder what exactly festivals

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are about. Whether they are meant to be a time to rejoice, or a time to indulge in an orgy of killing.

People in Kadabali offer foxes as a sacrifice to 'appease' their deity. Therefore, three days before the festival, foxes are hunted down in large numbers. The more the numbers caught, the luckier it is considered for a village. The foxes that die during the hunt are the lucky ones, for, a fate worse than death awaits those that survive. Their mouths and legs are bound and firecrackers tied to their tails. With the firecrackers bursting, their tails burn and the poor animals are set free. Most die.

In a village in Mysore, the worshippers get more brutal. The mouths of the foxes are sewn up and the petrified animals – blood dripping from their swollen mouths – are offered to the deity. Later stray dogs that have been starved are let loose on them.

All this, in the name of God."[5]

Pollution Makes a Splash, Again!

"Even as Delhi carries sweet memories of the festive fervour of Dussehra and Durga Puja, a river without a reprieve gasps for a lifeline. For, the 22 km stretch of the Yamuna, which flows through the capital, bears within its folds an additional 482 idols of Durga. What this means in pollution terms is around 12 tons of paint, 6 tons of oil and polish and an equal amount of flowers, leaves, coconut husk, straw and bamboos. So much for the Rs 225 crore, which has been spent so far on the Yamuna Action Plan.

Says Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) Chairman, Dilip Biswas, 'The immersion of these pollutants increases in the river the presence of carcinogenic materials such as zinc, lead, cadmium, arsenic, chromium and nickel, besides depleting oxygen levels.'

[5] "Brutal Worship", *The New Indian Express*, 24 August 2001.
[6] *The Times of India*, 21 October 2002.

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Also, the paint used to decorate idols should be made from natural colours, which are biodegradable. Unfortunately, even as the alarm bells ring loud and clear, the Great Indian Buck is passed around."[6]

The test of every religious, political or educational system is the philosophies that it produces and the spirit that it preserves.

If the system violates intelligence, it is bad. If it injures character, it is vicious and if it injures the conscience, it is criminal.

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8

The Current State of India

A doctor asked the husband to wait outside the chamber as he examined his wife. A few minutes later he came out and asked the nurse for a pair of pliers. She complied. The husband asked the doctor, "Is everything okay?" The doctor said, 'Wait' and he went back. Few minutes later, he came out and asked for a screwdriver. The husband asked the doctor what had happened. The doctor replied, "Have patience." Five minutes later, he came out again and asked for a hammer. This time the tense husband asked the doctor, "What's wrong with my wife?" The doctor said, "I don't know. I am still trying to open my bag."

Aren't our politicians and bureaucrats behaving like the doctor in the above story while citizens continue to suffer?

Why is it that when Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo perceive India and its people, they only see oneness, while our pseudo-intellectuals see nothing but the absence of oneness?

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Society means a community of ideas; without shared ideas on politics, morals and ethics no society can exist. Each one of us has ideas about what is good and what is evil; they cannot be kept private from the society in which we live. If men and women try to create a society in which there is no fundamental agreement about good and evil they will fail; if, having based it on common agreement, the agreement goes, the society will disintegrate.

– Lord Devlin

History proves that the loosening of moral bonds is often the first stage of the disintegration of a civil society. Civil societies are built, based on moral values.

Trying to create a society without common social values and standards, is like trying to communicate without a language. Institutions work collectively in cooperation, and not in competition with each other. They are founded on understanding responsibilities and the grammar of sharing. Without these elements, a society is an abstract notion. These are the elements that give society a human face. A society's survival depends upon the ability of its individuals to work together in order to accomplish that which cannot be achieved by a person working alone.

Is India A Nation?

We often hear, even from educated people, that India was never one nation but a cluster of many independent rulers. If we analyse this in depth, we find that, most nations including the European societies have gone through a process of evolution with common ideologies bringing about the form of a nation. What's different about India? The common binding factor is our ancient, rich culture and the teachings of our great epics the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Indian civilisation, it is estimated, goes back a few thousands years. Ancient India saw great accomplishments in the fields of arts and sciences and these are reflected by the

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civilisations of the Indus Valley, Mohenjo-daro and Harappa. It is said that people from all over the world came to India to learn from our achievements in these fields.

Unprincipled alliances today threaten the integrity of our nation. Caste and Religion have become tools in the hands of politicians for their personal gains at the cost of the country. According to Dr P.C. Alexander our short sighted, selfish, power-hungry politicians forget that "undeserving concessions once given become irreversible and will constitute very serious hindrances for national integration".

Today the problems facing us are:

1. Indifferences of the common citizens
2. Regionalism *v.* Nationalism
3. Corruption turned into extortion
4. Chaotic political system leading to unprincipled alliances.

A major threat to India staying united is the ever-growing trend of labelling people from other states in the country as outsiders. The terminology of "sons of soil" is being misused by politicians, thereby creating a major barrier for national integration.

Communal tensions are kept alive so that some political parties can play the role of a protector of communal interest.

The United States of America ought to be the most 'un-united' because its heterogeneous population has migrated from all over the world. But what is true is just the reverse. They have managed to integrate their society under one umbrella, at a national level, through education. This is where India has failed and let down its citizens.

Some major factors that can bring about national integration in India are:

1. Uniformity in laws for all citizens

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2. A massive education programme, through the media, to invoke a feeling of nationalism.

A nation can never be strong abroad if it is weak at home.

Every nation needs to have a common binding factor for its survival and existence, without which it is just a cluster of people who would fall apart over time.

What was the one binding factor that helped India achieve its Independence?

That one factor was that every Indian wanted to get rid of foreign rule and gain independence. That's what united India.

What then, is the binding factor in India today?

Is that one binding factor missing? Is that the reason why we are hurting? Not having a common reference point is a hindrance to national integration. This leads to the regional factors becoming stronger, such as linguistic, racial, religious identities and casteism.

Without a binding factor, "unity in diversity" is a hollow phrase.

Nature works on certain principles which can easily be labelled as the "Laws of Nature". The human mind can create unity in diversity or further diversity in diversity. When there is unity in diversity, societies progress. However, when there is diversity in diversity, civilisations perish. The question is, can we achieve unity in diversity? The answer is yes. The human body is a very clear example. All body parts are different from each other. They look different, are in different shapes and sizes and perform different functions. There is, however, a common thread that makes them work in harmony and cooperation. Even a small cut on the hand brings tears to the eye. When someone attacks you physically, the entire body by a reflex action moves into a defensive position automatically. Unless a nation functions like the different part of the body, it would disintegrate. Whenever a body part becomes

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dysfunctional or falls sick, it starts affecting the entire body, unless it is diagnosed and treated, which could be through the process of healing or surgery. The body is greater than the sum of its parts. Diversity must never take precedence over unity.

Non-Cooperation Movement

The Jallianwala Bagh tragedy was not just a Punjab affair, but a national one. Citizens felt that security of life and property without honour and freedom was not worth having. Non-cooperation was a tool to pressurise the British to gain freedom. It meant refusal and boycott of British jobs, British titles, schools and the courts. The movement was launched on 1 August 1920, the day Lokamanya Tilak passed away. The movement took momentum. Foreign clothings was boycotted and burned all over India. Shops selling foreign clothings were picketed. Thousands of students left schools and colleges and joined the movement. C.R. Das (a prominent attorney) and many other leading lawyers gave up their lucrative law practices. A strike was organised under the leadership of C.R. Das that triggered the rise of national consciousness. Porters, steam ship employees and railway engine drivers also went on strike. On 7 December 1921, Deshbandhu Das' wife and sister were also arrested which had an electrifying effect on thousands of people who offered themselves for arrest. Citizens refused to pay taxes. The nation was ignited, united and delighted in the anticipation of freedom. At the height of the movement, Congress took the decision to call off the movement. The whole country was badly demoralised.

Non-cooperation movement is a great example of unity in diversity.

Isn't it time that the nation stood up for another movement, this time for freedom from injustice, human indignity and corruption.

A press reporter once asked a politician, "Which book have you gained the most from?" The politician replied, "From the chequebook!"

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The poverty of goods can be cured, but the poverty of the soul is hard to cure.

The starting point where corruption is to be tackled, is political corruption. That is the root cause of all other kinds of corruption in our society.

The two most hated categories of people today are:

1. Politicians
2. Bureaucrats.

Typical behaviour of unprincipled bureaucrats and politicians:

1. They never arrive on time – keeping people waiting gives them a feeling of importance.
2. They are passive. This (they think) makes them appear wise – promotions are based on years of service than performance.
3. They are as vague as possible – to avoid accountability.
4. When in doubt, they appoint committees and sub-committees – purpose being to shift responsibility.
5. They postpone taking decisions and action – why rock the boat.
6. Whenever in trouble, they delegate – because they are looking to make someone a scapegoat.

ARE INDIA'S PROBLEMS ACTUALLY UNIQUE?

Many times, we hear people say, "We are a young democracy and we need time to grow up. These are growing pains." The sad part is – these are not growing pains, but pains for not growing up. How will we see adulthood, if we are afflicted with cancer in our childhood?

"India's problems are unique," is a common excuse for the habitual excuse makers. If analysed, are they really unique? There is hardly any country in the world where there are no differences in dialects,

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languages, culture or food habits. India's diversity of language, habits and religions can hardly be a reason for the chronic underdevelopment. This diversity, in fact, should be enjoyed and cherished. Some people justify India's status as a poor country and point it out as the prime reason for its backwardness. But, have they ever wondered, as to what it is exactly, that keeps us backward? If they would spare a thought for it, they would realise that it is not poverty but ignorance, immorality and corruption that pull us down. We don't have a money-problem, rather we have a credibility problem.

SIGNS OF DESPAIR, SIGNS OF HOPE

The craving for materialism and status, the greed for money and power, combined with low moral values are all signs of inferiority complexes and are fertile breeding grounds for corruption. We are not talking about piecemeal corruption here. We are talking of a wholly corrupted system that affects every area of a citizen's life.

Corruption has devastated many societies and countries, but there are many examples of nations that have beaten it and created enlightened environments. England, Hong Kong, Singapore and Sweden are such countries.

India's problems are not really unique.

Case in Point: the Singapore Story

People ask if it is fair to make a comparison between Singapore and India. Singapore is a city-state and we are a much larger country.

Without a proper system, discipline, values and justice, can you run a family of even five members? A state, is but a family! Only

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that it is a bigger family. What is a country? It is nothing, but many states co-existing under one umbrella. So, a comparison between the state and the family is perfect!

At the time when Singapore achieved its independence, corruption was a way of life. In Singapore today, corruption is a high-risk, low-reward activity. The nation has also set up an independent agency to check this risk in order to maintain a clean system.

Singaporean law provides that if a person is found guilty of accepting illegal gratification, he not only has to pay back the amount, but also undergoes punishment imposed by the court. The country has successfully reduced the opportunities and incentives for a corrupt way of life. "Singapore's per capita GDP has increased from (Singapore dollar) $ 1,330 in 1960 to $ 33,551 in 2001. Like Singapore, Hong Kong has no natural resources and only 6 per cent of its land is arable. Its GDP per capita is US $ 23,930.

Singaporean society is the first amongst the honest nations of Asia and stands at no. 3 internationally. South Korea's CPI (Corruption Perception Index) has improved from the 48th position to the 40th position in just a matter of two years, from 2000 to 2002. It is striving for the 20th position, and the scandals in that society that we hear of today is testimony to the fervour with which the Koreans are seeking to improve themselves. No stone is being left unturned to achieve this target.

Singapore has a total land area of 682.3 sq km. It has no natural resources, such as minerals or arable land. People are its biggest asset. Singapore has to import even its drinking water. This means that its dependence on other countries for survival is very high. It has a population of 4.1 million people and is densely populated, having 6,502 people per sq km, which is the third highest population density in the world. The people are a mix of various races. Almost 76 per cent of Singaporeans are Chinese, 14 per cent are Malays and 8 per cent are Indians. It has four official languages, English,

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Malay, Mandarin and Tamil. It has great diversity in religion also. Nearly 54 per cent of Singaporeans are either Buddhists or Taoists, 15 per cent are Muslims, 13 per cent are Hindus and 4 per cent are from other religions.[1]

For Singapore and Hong Kong, the extent of corruption is not important – the fact that it exists is by itself intolerable. Look at the stunning developments that small countries like Singapore and Switzerland have achieved in spite of being multilingual and multicultural nations. If these countries could manage to solve their problems, why can't we?

There are times when every great civilisation undergoes a period of crisis.

The responsibility for the continuing state of crisis that we live in, the all-pervasive mediocrity that is encountered in our nation, unethical trade and commercial practices, and the growth of violence, all rest substantially on the politics of corruption and criminalisation.

We need to learn from history. How did countries that were once very corrupt, become honest over a period of time? Take these examples:

1. "In the nineteenth century, corruption was rampant in Britain. However, Prime Minister Gladstone was able to bring a semblance of transparency and honesty into public life.
2. In the twentieth century, we have seen how the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) set up in Hong Kong in 1974 was able to bring greater cleanliness to public life at least till 1997, before the handover to China took place.
3. Botswana is quoted by the World Bank as a country that has improved its probity in public life."[2]

[1] Adapted from: Jon S.T. Quah, *Curbing Corruption in Asia*, Eastern Universities Press.

[2] *The Citizens' Guide to Promote Integrity*, CVC.

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Bertrand Russell once said, "Great civilisations had planted the seeds of their own destructions by failing to maintain moral standards." **Lack of values destroy societies. Laws and contracts, unless backed by moral obligations, lead to breach of trust and loss of credibility.**

Unjust governance is organised crime.

According to the CVC, the number of people benefiting from corruption may not be more than 5 per cent. If this figure of 5 per cent is close enough to reality, isn't the tail wagging the dog? Is it not the duty of every patriotic Indian to fight corruption? If yes, then aren't we failing in our duty if we gave the 5 per cent corrupt people a free hand to ruin the country, making victims out of the balance 95 per cent? Aren't a handful of traitors holding the country to ransom. The biggest question is, why can't the balance 95 per cent, the non-corrupt citizens throw out the corrupt 5 per cent?

Corruption, we feel has become so deep-rooted that it is now, inconceivable to ever imagine a corruption-free India. But Britain was faced with a very similar situation over a century ago. Also, the vision of an independent India became a reality only when our freedom fighters got together and fought the imperialists. Even that, was initially considered impossible till a small group of committed patriots took the lead and turned freedom into a reality.

The challenge that we face sometimes, is not the sheer magnitude of the problem. It is the dearth of solutions.

India is not the first country with problems, but is it certainly amongst the first few that are not coming up with solutions.

What greater slavery can there be than where honest citizens fear their own government and police instead of respecting them?

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9

Facts, Facts and More Facts: An Eye Opener

I have put in series of facts one after the other, not by default but by design, which reveals the quality of life in the nation or lack of it. What you read further may be just the tip of the ice-berg. If the following state of affairs does not make a citizens' heart bleed for the Nation, then what would?

"In 1947, S. Radhakrishnan stated:

'Unless we destroy corruption in high places, root out every trace of nepotism, love of power, profiteering and blackmarketing which have spoiled the good name of this country in recent times.'

Independent India's first major scandal to hit the headlines involved Krishna Menon's purchase of jeeps in 1948. What, in brief, transpired was that at the outbreak of Indo-Pak hostilities, the army urgently required 4,000 jeeps in Kashmir. According to the contract, sixty-five per cent of the total payment was to be made after the receipt of inspection certificate for the reconditioned jeeps.

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But this amount was paid within one month of signing the contract and before any inspection had been done.

Menon had negotiated and processed the contracts on his own, without following the normal procedures. Nehru ignored the adverse reports of the sub-committee appointed under Ananthasayanam Ayyanger to investigate the matter. In a truly preposterous response, the government preremptorily announced in September 1955 that the jeep scandal case was closed. To add to this, Krishna Menon was made a cabinet minister of India."[1]

A man told his friend, "I've got the worst kind of car trouble today." His friend asked, "What kind is it?" He said, "The payment won't stop and the engine won't start."

There are some people who'd rather be ruined by false praise than be helped by constructive criticism. So long as criticism is painful to the giver, he has the right to give constructive criticism. But the moment criticism becomes pleasurable, he no longer has the right to criticise.

Even though a good coach constantly criticises his athlete, his attitude permanently remains caring and corrective. Enormous efforts have been made in order to compile data from various sources for this book. This data is just a sampler, whereas the problem is massive. The objective for providing data in this chapter is that concerned citizens can take corrective action to bring back glory to India.

INDIA: GROWING OR SWELLING?

Is it fair that a starving person is jailed for a minor theft, whereas crore of public money is stolen and no one bats an eyelid? Unscrupulous traders adulterate food and medicines, disabling

[1] S.S. Gill, *The Pathology of Corruption*, Harper Collins Publishers India.

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people and taking innocent lives. The environment is being ravaged by toxic wastes from factories and no one questions it.

IN SHORT, PRIVATE INTEREST GAINS PRECEDENCE OVER SOCIAL GOOD.

The Good News

- "The Indian economy grew at 8.2 per cent in July–September of 2003. It is estimated to stand at 7.2 per cent plus in 2003-2004 and 6.5 per cent plus in 2004-2005.
- Sales of PCs and mobile phones are expected to double in 2004.
- Passenger car companies expect to sell close to a million units in 2004."[2]

A man asked his friend, "Do you want to watch the six o'clock news and get indigestion or wait for the eleven o'clock news and get insomnia?"

The Reality

- "The feel-good factor affects only 20 per cent of our population. What about the balance 80 per cent? They've never had it so bad. There was no feel-good factor before the monsoons in June 2003. It has only come in now, when we have had good rains last year.
- The income of the rural population (80 per cent) has not risen since 1989. Food prices have gone up, while prices of laptops, mobile phones and air travel have come down.
- Forex reserves stand at $100 bn. Ila Patnaik, senior economist at the NCAER feels that, 'If rupee expectations reverse, $20 bn to $30 bn could leave the country in a week's time.'

[2] *Outlook*, 26 January 2004.

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- Michael Carter, the World Bank's country director for India says, 'On the millennium development goal, in areas like infant mortality, homelessness, poverty, health and education, India's performance is definitely not "shining".'
- Nothing is being done for the poor and the dispossessed – tribals who lost their land to the Narmada Dam Project; displaced Kashmiri Hindus, who are victims of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir; Muslim craftsmen and other people of Gujarat who were displaced after the riots.
- The continued debt of the state and central government is close to 75 per cent of the GDP.
- The average growth rate of the economy between 1999 and 2003 has been only 5.7 per cent. Only in the third quarter of 2003, did the economy grow at 8.2 per cent."[3]

"The enrolment figures showed that 97 per cent of children in the age group of 6–14 years were in school. An independent survey revealed, no more than 42 per cent of the village children really went to school."[4]

Practical politics is all about ignoring facts.

Looking at the above, we question as to how authentic our statistics are. Which one do we believe? I wonder if the reality is actually something else.

There are many challenges and obstacles that we face in our path to real growth and development – social, economic and political. We must grapple with and overcome them. Let us first take a good look at some of the **social problems** in India that have to be overcome/dealt with in order to make way for development.

[3] *Outlook*, 26 January 2004.
[4] *The Pioneer*, 25 January 2004.

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Alcoholism on the Rise Among Teenagers

"Alcoholism has become a way of life in Delhi.

Problem drinking, according to city doctors, is now being diagnosed at an earlier age, often in 12-13 year olds.

Dr Jitendra Nagpal, consultant psychiatrist at VIMHANS, said, 'The most alarming part is that increased social acceptability of drinking is sending wrong signals to children, who decide that if drinks are the bond between their parents and guests at home, there is nothing wrong about it.'

At AIIMS too, the number of cases of alcoholism has 'at least doubled' in the last ten years, said Rajesh Sagar, Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry.

'One reason for this is the fact that people who start early on alcohol are more likely to develop a dependence problem later,' he said."[5]

"*Child trafficking* is a slur on the fair name of our Nation. According to experts, about 30,000 children go missing every year. Child trafficking is the worst form of the violation of child rights."[6]

India's Living Dead

"A shocking expose of the ghoulish practice of declaring living people 'dead' by government officials who are bribed to forge documents and issue fake certificates. There are about 10,000 'dead' men doing the rounds of different offices and courts with their applications. Are these ghosts stalking the corridors of power? Or, are they missing people, trying to prove that they are back. They are neither. They belong to a special category of 'dead', because the government records say so. And the fateful decree

[5] *Sunday Times of India*, 4 January 2004.
[6] *The Times of India*, 21 January 2004.

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has been imposed on these hapless individuals by a cunning relative and a conniving law official in the land records office at the village, *tehsil* and district levels, who have invented the devilish trick of killing off people when still alive, and who have managed to acquire the property of that person.

And as these 'dead' people continue to haunt the courts, hoping to obtain justice, they are transformed gradually from tragic and strange people to mere objects of curiosity and mirth. To prove their existence, these dead men have left no stone unturned. They have tried to commit an offence so that they can be charged as criminals, and hoped that this subversive method would give them a safe passage to the world of the living, including the desperate one of attempting to commit suicide, which is a cognisable offence. Others plunge into electoral contests, hoping that there cannot be a more eloquent way of declaring that one is alive and kicking. But the menace continues, and the courts remain silent spectators."[7]

Paying to See Your Own Baby

"In the city of Bangalore, southern India, an astonishing 70 per cent people have to pay the orderly to see their own baby. If the bribe is not paid, parents often fear that the staff might 'swap the babies'. The survey revealed that the poor pay huge bribes in their interactions with the public maternity hospitals. A further 61 per cent of the respondents were forced to pay for medicines, though public policy clearly mandates that they be given free of charge."[8]

State of Fear

"In India's Bihar State, even politicians may be cashing in on the only game in town; kidnapping for ransom."[9]

[7] Pradeep Kumar, *National Review,* December 2003, p. 26.

[8] Gopakumar Krishnan, *Transparency International,* 'Global Corruption Report 2003'.

[9] Alen Peny, *Time Magazine*, 23 June 2003.

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Garland of Hope

"The drought-flood-drought syndrome repeats itself periodically. We have 4 per cent water resources and 15 per cent of world's population. Per capita availability of water was 6,008 cubic metres in 1947. Now, it is 1,700 cubic metres. Our irrigation systems run at one-third their operational efficiency."[10]

How safe is our drinking water?

Across India, water is either scarce or badly polluted. Only 10 per cent of our urban waste-water is treated before it spills into rivers, lakes, and seas, polluting them further and, hence, disturbing our ecological balance. Water in many areas contains pesticides and fertilisers.

Indian River Water Unfit for Drinking

"Washington: A sample survey of some of India's major rivers shows that while most rivers are 'clean' enough to support aquatic life, their water is *unfit for drinking and even bathing because of the presence of fecal matter.* "[11]

Ground Water in Most Areas is not Fit for Drinking

"New Delhi: Nearly 50 per cent of *Delhi's groundwater is not fit for human consumption because of widespread contamination by nitrates, fluorides, trace metals and dissolved solids.*

We have approximately over 60 million disabled people in India. What are we doing to help them?"[12]

[10] *The Times of India*, 14 August 2004.
[11] World Bank Report.
[12] *Hindustan Times*, 6 December 1999.

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According to *Asiaweek*, dated 20 December 1996, nearly 10 per cent of India's population is physically handicapped.

Kashmiri Pandits Despair About Return to the Valley

"Shibban Krishan is among 3,50,000 Kashmiri Pandits who left the Kashmir Valley in 1990 fearing persecution at the hands of Islamic terrorists. The uprooted Pandits have now spent 10 years away from their homes."[13]

Is this our tryst with destiny where close to half-a-million citizens have become refugees in their own country?

Nursing Homes to Clean Up Their Act

"90 per cent of Delhi's nursing homes are unregistered. They don't keep proper records, audits and aren't controlled by any monitoring authority."[14]

This is Delhi, the capital of India which is supposed to be the showcase of the Nation. Can you imagine the plight of a common citizen living elsewhere in the country? Is this our tryst with destiny?

Night of the Long Knives

"None of us is surprised any longer when the government misbehaves.

We have heard of the State killing its own citizens and fudging their DNA in Chittisingpora. And so I come to the most disturbing question of all: if the cards are so powerfully stacked on the side of the wrong, why should anybody ever want to do the right thing?"[15]

[13] *The Economic Times*, 27 January 2000.
[14] *Hindustan Times*, 30 December 1999.
[15] Shoma Chaudhary, *Hindustan Times*, 7 September 2002.

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How Much Suffering Before We have An Impartial Police?

"Are the mandarins sitting in North Block listening? Is the media interested? Will the judiciary care to step in? How much more will the people of this country have to suffer before they get an impartial, non-partisan, professional police force enforcing the Rule of Law?"[16]

Terror at Indian Airports

"The problem with corruption at airports is not that the cops make money but that anybody who wants to hijack a plane or blow it up can do so by paying off a police officer. After all, if you keep slipping a Rs 500 note to the inspector each time that you travel, he'll be happy to wave you through on the third or fourth occasion – which is when a clever terrorist would actually carry his weapon."[17]

The Right to Sight

Strategy to End Needless Blindness

"Over 80 per cent of the cases of blindness, mostly among the rural poor, can be prevented or cured with a little care, awareness and proper and timely medical intervention that are not expensive. And studies show that these 'blinding figures' could double in 20 years if urgent measures are not taken immediately. The causes vary from Vitamin A deficiency, measles and conjunctivitis of newborns to cataract, congenital glaucoma and retinopathy due to premature delivery. Over 25 million people have impaired vision."[18]

[16] Mr Prakash Singh, Director General of Police (Retd.), *Hindustan Times.*
[17] Vir Sanghvi, 'Counterpoint', *Sunday Hindustan Times*, 11 January 2004.
[18] *The New Indian Express*, 12 October 2002.

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Eye Care

It is estimated that some 45 million people, more than half of the world's cataract sufferers, are from India.

According to the World Health Organisation, every five seconds one person in our world goes blind . . . and a child goes blind every minute.

Inadequate Service

"The hypothesis is that in India, cataract is developed sooner than in the developed countries. A tropical climate, adulterated food, and the use of chemical fertilisers and insecticides to increase agricultural productivity, are said to be the main factors for development of early cataract in our country."[19]

Bihar's Bloodless Murder

"Close to 40,000 employees of the government have not been paid salaries for at least 10 years.

Countless have retired and have received neither salaries nor pension benefits. Multiply that number by six for the average family and at a conservative estimate, you have 800,000 citizens going heartlessly to ground because the government will not pay for the labours it has extracted.

Each one here is a walking case of murder, each one a silent screaming petition against a killer regime.

The Indian Express travels across the state to bring you some of these faces and the stories behind them. About why they are the way they look, about who has blood on his hands. We start with a young man who set himself on fire on Independence Day – and died this week.

Paritosh Bhattacharya's son, Chandan, set himself on fire in front

[19] *The Times of India*, Ahmedabad, 23 August 1999.

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of the Patna High Court on Independence Day. Five days later, he died in a benighted ward of the Patna Medical College Hospital, not of burns, but renal failure.

Chandan, 22, set himself on fire because his father had not brought home a salary from the Bihar Agro Industries Development Corporation for the last nine years. His mother died of tuberculosis a few years ago. There was no money to afford a diet or drugs. Two years ago, Chandan's younger brother Ajay died of pulmonary oedema.

There was no money for treatment. Chandan dropped out of his BA degree course because he could not pay his fees. He, like his father, took to taking tuitions so that the family could eat and his younger sisters 19-year-old Pratima and Aditi, 14, could continue their studies.

But that was never enough.

But Bhattacharya himself had illusions. He believed the courts would bring relief. For, in 1994, he along with 600 employees, had gone to the Patna High Court seeking payment of salaries. In 1997, the Court had directed the government to either run the corporation or to settle staff dues within four months. Nothing happened.

The Government returned to the Court a full two years later with a prayer for liquidation. That's still pending as Bhattacharya walks to office every day, signs the register and waits."[20]

Kids Still Waiting for Mid-day Meals

"When a five-year-old sneaked into a polling booth to see for himself the electronic mechanism by which MPs are elected, he simply asked, 'Why do we vote?' When indelible ink was put on someone's finger, he wanted to know why.

[20] *Sunday Express*, 25 August 2002.

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Answers to both the innocent queries led to a spate of questions. Though it wasn't difficult to convince him on the need to vote, it was embarrassing to tell him that the ink mark was necessary to check 'bogus' voting. 'What is bogus voting?' he asked. A lie came handy: this black mark identifies that a person has done a good job of voting.

Imagine if he were told the real purpose behind the ink mark. He would have indirectly learnt the first lesson of politics: cheating."[21]

Poverty Prescriptions

A third of India's population are living below the poverty line.

"Even today, a quarter of the world's poverty is measured by the 'one dollar per day' international norm.

In India, the Net Poverty Line measures the amount of money required to replenish the energy equivalent of 2,400 kcal per day in urban areas (2,100 in rural). This is about half-a-kg of rice, which translates as Rs 7-8 per day per person. With this very, very low cut off, 26 per cent Indians fall below the poverty line (BPL). Internationally, two dollars per day per person is poverty and one dollar per day per person is chronic poverty. If you apply these yardsticks, 70 per cent of our people will qualify as poor and the BPL 26 per cent will qualify as worse than chronically poor."[22]

Suicides by Andhra Pradesh Farmers Continue

"Nearly 3,000 farmers ended their lives. Apart from harassment by moneylenders, spurious seeds and lack of water, it has been acknowledeged that poor delivery of agricultural extension services has also contributed to the farmers' distress."[23]

[21] *The Times of India*, 17 May 2004.
[22] *The Times of India*, 7 January 2004.
[23] Article by S. Nagesh Kumar in *The Hindu*, 10 June 2004.

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The farmers committed suicide not because they were lazy or they shirked hard-work, but they were denied basic amenities like water, electricity and seeds by the government to even make an honest living.

Increased investment in primary education, health care and infrastructure would release productive forces to get rid of poverty and bring prosperity. In a poor country like India, economic growth and education are perhaps the best anti-poverty programmes.

> *If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.*
>
> – John F. Kennedy

Has globalisation generally raised the standard of living? Selectively yes, generally no.

Head-Loads and Heartbreaks

- "Thousands of dalit women in Rajasthan work as scavengers.
- They clean dry latrines everyday for as little as a *roti* a day and Rs 5 per household each month.
- They also carry night soil in containers on their heads to a dumping place some distance away.
- Even other scheduled caste groups treat these *bhangis* or *mehters* or *balmikis* as untouchables.
- Attempts by women to break the practice has met with stiff social resistance."[24]
- "70 per cent Indians (approx.) have no access to sanitation."[25]

"One thing that nauseates foreign visitors to India is the sight of men urinating and defecating in open places. Take an early morning train from any city and you will see rows

[24] P. Sainath, *The Hindu*, 3 October 1999.
[25] *The Economic Times*, 13 July 2003.

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of people sitting along the rail tracks on both sides. The sight revolting, and the practice spreads vermin and diseases. No one seems to be concerned about doing something about this."[26]

DREAM

Bright Future

"This year, so much research and development money was invested in India or raised internally that India was catapulted to one of the top 10 R&D nations in the world. Not that outsourcing, especially high-end back-office options, can't be brushed aside. Not when we're looking at figures of $57 billion in revenues, four million jobs and 7 per cent of India's GDP by 2008."[27]

Health/Education: A Great Opportunity

Providing good and affordable health care. While serving humanity India can provide employment and economic growth to its people.

Doctor India: Best (and Cheap)

"Despite potential, we don't compare with the US and UK as a health and education destination.

Thirty-eight Apollo Hospitals treated 60,000 foreign patients in the last five years. Thailand's Bumrungrad Hospital treats 1,30,000 people every year."[28]

Opportunity remains an opportunity only, unless translated into reality.

[26] *Hindustan Times*, 11 October 2003.
[27] *Hindustan Times*, 1 January 2004.
[28] *Hindustan Times*, 1 January 2004.

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BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) The New Buzz

"Cost gains are clearly overriding such drawbacks as a poor infrastructure, an unstable political environment, and a population prone to emotional outbursts against foreign presence of any hue. With around 120,000 IT graduates coming out of universities and institutes every year, it is natural for companies to take advantage of this enormous pool at competitive costs. But real value stems only from home-grown original development. China will catch up with India in outsourcing as early as 2007. Then there is also the looming threat of the US and the UK succumbing to labour pressure, and acting to keep offshore outsourcing in check."[29]

Nightmare

It has been reported all over the media that India will become the third largest economy by the year 2020. India needs to focus on three major areas – infrastructure, agriculture and human resource development – in order to become an economic superpower. WE CANNOT AFFORD TO BE COMPLACENT with our strong showing in the economy in the recent past.

However, real facts that disturb the common Indian, are:

- "Thirty-five million people are unemployed here.
- Twenty million enter the labour force, once every four years. Where is the space to accommodate them?
- Unemployment may, therefore, go up to 9.79 per cent in the year 2007.
- There are 212 million people in the age group of 14 to 24 years, but only 107 million have jobs."[30]

[29] G. Joslin Vethakumar, *National Review*, p. 84, December 2003.
[30] N. Vidyasagar, *The Sunday Times of India*, 18 January 2004.

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SCAMS AND SCANDALS

Three Heads of States went to see God. The American asked, "Dear God when will corruption end in my country?" God said, "100 years." The American was disappointed, started crying and said; "I will not see my country clean during my lifetime." Then came the Japanese Head of State. He asked God the same question as the American. God replied, "30 years." The Japanese started crying and said, "I am depressed. It means corruption will not end during my lifetime." Then came the Indian Head of State who asked God the same question. God started crying and said, "I am disappointed to say corruption will not be wiped out during my lifetime."

In India, scams and scandals are not occasional affairs – they are daily affairs. Corruption in a society depends upon individuals and social values.

"Scams and scandals of corruption have prominently been with us during the last many years.

- BOFORS GUN: Rs 65 crore; case filed on 22-01-1990; chargesheet filed on 22-10-1999; convictions: none as yet; recoveries: nil.
- AIRBUS: Rs 120 crore; case filed on 23-03-1990; chargesheet not filed yet; convictions: none yet; recoveries: nil.
- INDIAN BANK: Rs 762.92 crores; cases filed in 1992; chargesheets filed; convictions: none yet; recoveries: nil; the government has pumped in funds to revive the bank.
- FODDER (BIHAR): Rs 950 crores; cases filed in 1996; chargesheets filed; convictions: one (three officials); recoveries: nil.
- PETROL PUMPS: Cases filed in 1996 and 1997; chargesheets: none filed as yet; convictions: none; recoveries: nil.
- UREA: Rs 133 crores; case filed in 1996; chargesheet filed; conviction: none.

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- UTI: Rs 9,500 crore; case filed: one in 2001; chargesheet: not filed as yet; recoveries: nil.

Indeed, no CBI case involving ministers has resulted in a firm court conviction in the last 40 years."[31]

UTI Scam

"UTI is India's largest mutual fund manager. State-run UTI handled Rs 720 billion (US $14.8 billion) until July 2001, when it shocked its 43 million investors by freezing redemption. UTI colluded with local stockbrokers and foreign institutional investors to rig share prices, with the result that profits worth Rs 35 billion (US $729 million) were repatriated illegally. The UTI scandal also took the lid off the 'promoter-politician-financier' network: UTI invested funds in 285 companies that did not exist."[32]

CAT Scam

"The kingpin behind the CAT Exam Leak, Ranjit Don, ran a racket worth around Rs 100 crore simply by helping students cheat. And he thought getting them jobs would get him to Parliament. **THE GOOD DOCTOR DON.**

The Price of Admission

CBSE Medical examination	:	Rs Ten lakh
Engineering examination	:	Rs Ten lakh
State medical or dental college entrance exam	:	Rs Eight lakh
CDS/NDA	:	Rs Four lakh
Staff Selection grade exam	:	Rs Three lakh
BPS Commission exam	:	Rs Five to eight lakh
Bank Probationary exam	:	Rs Five to Eight lakh

[31] Jon S.T. Quah, *Curbing Corruption in Asia*, Eastern Universities Press, p. 69.

[32] Transparency International, 'Global Corruption Report 2003', Profile Books.

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Ranjit's Irresistible Offer to the Police:

Ranjit Don's empire was not built overnight, but over a decade with the help of politicians, bureaucrats, police officers and, above all, doctors."[33]

Telgi Stamp Scam

"The Telgi stamp paper scam is emerging as one of the biggest scams in recent times. If embarrassed government officials peg the scale of the scam at Rs 3,000 crore, then we must know that the true extent of the problem is far worse. Congratulations. This may be our first Rs 1,00,000 crore scam!

One shudders to imagine that the huge amount of money that should have gone into government coffers, is lying in the bank accounts of corrupt policemen, judicial stamp vendors and perhaps many politicians, if one were to believe newspaper reports."[34]

Health (Un) Care

India today is home to one-fourth of the world's hungry, according to the World Bank. We also have the dubious distinction of being home to the fastest growing hungry population. By 2000-01, an average Indian family of four members was absorbing 93 kg less foodgrain compared to three years earlier. Given their very low income and purchasing power, it had only one possible impact – a decline in consumption by the poor.[35]

According to the UN, waterborne diseases affect 80 per cent of the children.[36]

On 7 December 2000, the Supreme Court reminded the state of

[33] *Sunday Hindustan Times*, 30 November 2003.
[34] Pushkar Raj, *Telgi Stamp Scam*, People's Union for Civil Liberties.
[35] Utsa Patnaik, 'Rural India in Ruins', *Frontline*, 28 February–12 March 2004.
[36] Chlorine Chemistry Council, 20 March 2001.

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its duty to provide safe drinking water, a right under Article 21 of the Constitution.[37]

"A specialised chest hospital in Patparganj area in east Delhi is functioning without using its X-ray machine. Investigations for tuberculosis at the Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Chest Hospital have suffered for over two years because there is no permanent operator for the X-ray machine at the hospital."[38]

> *The sad truth is that most evil is done by those who never make up their minds to be good or evil.*
>
> – Hannah Arendt

Medicos on 24-hour Strike in Hazaribagh: Extortion

"The Indian Medical Association went on strike to demand the release of Dr Umesh Sinha, who was kidnapped three days ago."[39]

What an industry!

In a corrupt system, e-commerce stands for extortion, which is already franchised by the criminals. They have demarcated their territories to loot the Nation in connivance with corrupt local officials and politicians.

Expedite DDA Plot Allotment

"I had applied for a DDA plot under the Rohini scheme in my maiden name (Renu Kapoor). Despite the fact that 22 years have elapsed since the registration, I have not yet been allotted a plot. My application number is 162406. In spite of repeated requests to the officers concerned and written reminders, I have not yet heard anything from the DDA."[40]

[37] Centre for Science and Environment Press Releases, 25 August 2003.
[38] *The Times of India*, 19 July 2003.
[39] *Hindustan Times*, 24 April 2003.
[40] *Hindustan Times*, 14 April 2003.

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Our civil servants are neither servants, nor civil.

– Winston Churchill

The Indian bureaucracy wields a lot of power on the public but they are helpless in front of the politician. Instead of opposing the politicians, the bureaucrats have decided to join them, which is now double-trouble for the country. They have either become sycophants or partners. When they took office, they took an oath to serve the Nation with integrity. Today, they need to ask themselves who they are serving – themselves, the politicians or the Nation?

Pesticides

"A recent survey ICMR report showed 51 per cent of foods in India were contaminated with pesticides, of which 20 per cent had levels exceeding the Maximum Tolerance Limits (MTL)."[41]

Tourism in India

The lack of commitment to the Nation is reflected in the total mismanagement of the tourism industry. It is not only the foreign nationals, but returning NRIs who are subjected to the same harassment without discrimination. What is called the 'call of nature' probably stands true in India, which is reflected in the lack of adequate number of public toilets or their deplorable condition. Touts indulge in organised crime, misdirecting the tourists for personal gain, regardless of the damage to the Nation – both in goodwill and revenue. The corruption and harassment hold true to quote 'womb to tomb' and 'arrival to departure'. Even our holy places are not spared as religion has become big business. It is a way of playing on sentiments, emotions and fears to extort money.

So much for a "tryst with destiny"!

[41] *Sunday Times of India*, 17 August 2003.

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The untapped potential of the tourism and related industry is such that it has the potential of removing unemployment almost completely.

Welcome to India – your nightmare has just begun – ill-equipped counters, a disorganised prepaid transport system, officials who don't care and greedy touts are the tourists' first tryst at the international airport."[42]

Watch Your Wallet at IGI

"Reports of extortion by custom officials are on the rise:

- Custom officials allegedly extorted money from two passengers at the IGI airport.
- Tour operators and airport staff alleged passengers are routinely harassed by custom officials.
- One of the passengers was allegedly threatened by a customs official that he would not be allowed to board his flight if he did not pay him."[43]

"Citizens and nations reveal their CHARACTER by the way they treat their ELDERLY and the DISABLED."

Respect for the Elderly – Jumbled Priorities

Why are the old not treated as respectable elders? They, the elderly are one of the greatest resources worthy of respect, yet the most neglected and overlooked. As one grows up in age, it is assumed that with years of experience, one gains maturity. With maturity of age comes clarity of thought. With clarity of thought, better decision-making. The younger generation need not reinvent the

[42] *Sunday Times of India*, 13 April 2003.
[43] *The Times of India*, 23 January 2004.

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wheel and make the same mistakes. The hindsight of the mature can be the foresight of the young.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIA

Putting Off Suitors

"At one level, the World Investment Report, 2002, released by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), only confirms what is already obvious to us, that India's performance attracting Foreign Direct Investment is rather pathetic. It shows that India ranks a lowly 119th. Put that against China's 47th rank or even Pakistan's 77th and Sri Lanka's 85th, and the ranking looks even worse. But the WIR also gives us a fix on just what we have been missing out on, as a result of India's inability to attract sizeable FDI flows. Thus, by failing to attract FDI, India is missing out on a huge opportunity, one that China is taking full advantage of."[44]

In prosperous countries like Finland, New Zealand, Singapore, etc., corruption is very low. On a scale of 10, Finland scores 9.7 points in integrity, whereas India scores 2.7 points.[45]

Foreign investments do not come as a philanthropic gesture. They always come with a price. Any change in the existing system does not automatically qualify as reform.

There is a time and a place for foreign investment. Today, India needs to import skills and technology, as it seeks to progress. We also need greater competition in all our industries. Without competition, we will see sub-standard products and services in our marketplace. Tomorrow, if we build our economy and upgrade our abilities, then we ourselves will become capable of investing abroad.

[44] *The Economic Times*, 19 September 2002.
[45] N. Vittal, *Corruption in India*, Academic Foundation.

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Foreign investments don't come easily to India for the following reasons:

1. Delays in the decision-making process. Too much of bureaucratic interference and red-tapism.
2. Little faith in the strength of our democracy and in the maintenance of a progressive and reformist culture.
3. Lack of adequate recourse in case of a problem.
4. Political uncertainties. Whenever there are political uncertainties, money flows out, not in.

All of the above factors are credibility issues and not money issues. This prevents investors from viewing India as an investment destination. It prevents them from making any long-term commitment.

A corrupt environment demoralises people, breeds criminal activity, erodes justice and brings insecurity. All this leads to political instability. Wherever there is political instability, people take the view that it would perhaps be more gainful to plan for the immediate future rather than look beyond their noses and plan for the next generation.

> *I don't make jokes. I just watch the government and report the facts.*
>
> – Will Rogers

AIDS: Moral or Medical Problem?

"According to a survey conducted by the WHO, in the year 2000, it was estimated that:

- Close to 4 million Indians were suffering from AIDS.
- AIDS has moved from the high risk to the general population.
- Men are victims in more than 75 per cent of the cases.
- In approximately 90 per cent of the cases, transmission is through unprotected sex or use of contaminated needles.

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- Modes of transmission:
  - Sexual contact: 85 per cent
  - Blood transfusion: 3.5 per cent
  - IDUs: 3.5 per cent
  - Prenatal transmission: 2 per cent
  - Others: 6 per cent."[46]

This just goes to show that almost 95 per cent of AIDS is preventable.

It is estimated that about 10,000 people are falling prey to AIDS everyday.

It is worth repeating – 10,000 are falling prey to AIDS everyday.

What do the statistics demonstrate?

1. We are sitting on a time bomb.
2. We re-use old, unsterilised needles due to lack of quality control. Innocent victims, thus, find their way into the jaws of death.
3. AIDS is more of a moral and ethical problem, than a medical problem.

Nature has its way of teaching people their lessons of morality. It only goes to show that promiscuous lifestyle like pre-marital and extra-marital sex bring along both medical and moral decay.

Stop the Rot

"This is not to discount the achievements of the information technology sector: but the fact remains that IT has provided only five lakh job opportunities. An estimated 320 million people desperately need food, despite more than 60 million tonnes stocked

[46] HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific Region 2001, a WHO Presentation. Articles over the Internet.

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in the open at the turn of the century. But this has failed to evoke any political expediency. In fact, 17 million tonnes of surplus food meant for the hungry was exported in 2002 at below-poverty line prices. While people die of hunger, the government sits atop a mountain of foodgrain. In 2001, starvation deaths were reported in over 13 states while the storage facilities of the Food Corporation of India (FCI) were full of grain, some of it rotting and rat-infested. When export markets could not be found for this surplus, there was a proposal to dump it into the sea to make storage space for the next crop."[47]

Looking at the nightmares, one wonders is it progress or prolonged death? The examples given here are just a few and probably represent the tip of the iceberg. Most of the citizens at some point in their lives have been victimised by the system.

A plumber received an emergency call to repair a leaking tap. He assured the client that he would be there in a few minutes, even though he knew his van was being repaired, which would take two hours and negotiating the traffic, which would take another two hours. Four hours later, he finally arrived. The door was opened by an irritated man. The plumber, putting on his brightest smile asked, "Are you the person with a leaking tap?" The man replied, "I was. Now, I am the man with an indoor pool."

ANY PROBLEM THAT IS NOT ADDRESSED IN A TIMELY MANNER, COMPOUNDS.

[47] *Hindustan Times*, 31 January 2004.

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10

Corruption

Tolerance beyond the point of absurdity is not a virtue, but cowardice.
Corrupt governments neither let citizens live with respect, nor die with dignity.

Ancient civilisations like those of the Egyptians, Jews, Chinese, Greeks and Romans were all infested with varying degrees of corruption and finally many of them were destroyed by it.

The Roman Empire destroyed itself as a result of rampant corruption in the form of bribery, treachery, murder, looting and selling off of public offices. Bribes were extorted from the relatives of those condemned to death for an 'easy' execution – a swift axe blow. A torturous death was given to those who could not afford to bribe.

A man went to an astrologer and asked what his future looked like. The astrologer said, "Your next six months are going to be terrible."

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The man was disturbed and asked what was going to happen after six months. The astrologer said, "You will get used to it."

We have got used to accepting all our problems as being pre-destined. We have lost our fighting spirit.

Constant exposure to a wrong, it is said, first promotes tolerance, then acceptance and finally involvement.

WHAT IS CORRUPTION?

The World Bank defines corruption as the use of public office for private gain.

Democracy is based on the will of the people. But corrupt democracy is based on corruption, where it is encouraged and rewarded. Most citizens, consider corruption the biggest problem that India faced.

CAUSES OF CORRUPTION

"Corruption is:

1. Anti-national
2. Anti-poor

1. ***Corruption – anti-national:*** The *Hawala* scam showed how anti-national Kashmiri militants were receiving money from abroad through *Hawala*, the same route through which other 'honourable' sections of society like politics, business and bureaucracy were receiving money. The Tehelka.com expose on 13 March 2001 also highlighted dramatically, the extent of corruption in politics and defence deals. These incidents make it obvious that corruption threatens national security and is anti-national.

2. ***Corruption – anti-poor:*** 31 per cent of foodgrains and 36 per cent of sugar meant for the Public Distribution System (PDS),

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which is designed to provide security to people below the poverty line, gets diverted to the black market. The late Rajiv Gandhi once observed that out of every rupee meant for the anti-poverty programme, only 15 paise reached the beneficiaries. Corruption is, therefore, anti-poor.

3. ***Corruption – anti-development:*** The Human Development Report for South Asia, 1999 says that if India's corruption level comes down to that of the Scandinavian countries, our FDI will grow by 12 per cent. The World Bank pointed out that corruption discourages Foreign Direct Investments. Societies with high levels of trust show a greater level of prosperity because they adhere to their commitments and respect their contracts.

4. ***Corruption – a matter of life and death:*** For example, corruption in the pharmaceutical industry, results in spurious drugs flooding the market. This may mean the death of many innocent people. Illicit liquor tragedies also show, how corruption leads to death."[1]

"Carnegie Mellon Pulls Out of 'Sankhya Vahini' Project"

"The Rs1,000 crore 'Sankhya Vahini' communication network project, which has been mired in controversy right from the start, is off. Its promoters, Carnegie Mellon University and IUNet Board, have pulled out of the project because of Government of India's 'inaction' for nearly two years now."[2]

LICENCE TO KILL

"A total of 3,06,376 accidents were reported in the country, out of which, 3,24,520 persons were injured and 81,036 deaths per

[1] *The Citizens' Guide to Promote Integrity*, CVC.
[2] S. Rajagopalan's article in *Hindustan Times*, 19 October 2001.

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year were reported as per figures quoted by the NCRB in the year 1999. The unreported figures are much higher. This causes serious disablement and financial loss to the public. All licensees do not get involved in rash and negligent driving/riding. The big question is, whether a driver is good or bad. Is it not criminal to allow raw, untrained hands to drive or ride at the very outset? Every person in this country knows how to manage a licence, in fact any kind of licence."[3]

Corruption

Caste and clan, and not merit decide distribution of favours and resources. The reason being it is pay-back time for the support received prior to obtaining power. The result is that the deserving get demoralised and in the process, the nation is impoverished.

> *Men are more bribed by their loyalties and ambitions than money.*
>
> – Robert Jackson

In societies that are suffering from "inferiority complex", any misuse of power and flouting of rules is considered a demonstration of 'manliness' (macho). Abuse of such power often impresses the impressionable minds who imitate these flashy role models. False lifestyle gains respectability, without questioning the means. Where falsehood prevails, wealth, not values become the basis for legitimate social identity. Ends become more important than means. Corrupt people choose to remain blind, deaf and silent about truth. Ego and jealousy are the driving forces in corrupt people. They cannot bear to see anyone reach higher than themselves.

Absence of Stigma Against Corruption

There was a time when a corrupt person was considered

[3] Adapted from an article written by Mr Vijai Shukul, IG, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh.

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undesirable and unacceptable in any society. People with integrity did not want to socialise with people from corrupt families or have their children married into them. What happened to those values that proclaimed that corruption is BAD? The degradation of values today is justified when we say, "You have to be practical." Corruption has not only become an accepted norm, it is almost welcomed. In France, corrupt police officials are often ostracised. Why is the same treatment meted out in India? Why don't we attach stigma to corruption any more? This would go a long way in promoting the culture of integrity.

Corruption in India: Is It an Exception or the Rule?

The proof of integrity lies in its practice. It does need to be proved. **When citizens believe that corruption is intolerable and not inevitable, we will see a different India.** Today, every patriotic Indian citizen wants to see India as a corruption-free country. It is the national character of the people that decides the nation's future. The sum total of individuals' characters in society makes or breaks the nation.

Corruption depletes resources, increases poverty, punishes the innocent and destroys a society.

Political corruption has grown to monstrous proportions. When the trustees of the nation themselves become corrupt, senior officers in their departments are rendered weak and ineffective to check and bring to book, corrupt subordinate officers with political connections.

Corruption is a very comprehensive evil, as it is a common tool for all anti-social activities. ***An evil conscience may be silent but not secure.*** The corrupt follow the motto, "*If the first lie doesn't succeed, lie and lie again.*"

Corrupt men are undignified because, what is dignity without integrity and honesty? The only guardian within an individual, is

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his conscience, which is brought forth by values. It is the inner voice, which guides us in the right direction. To the corrupt and dishonest a conscience put to sleep is a source of great happiness. People who betray their country, friends and loved ones, actually betray their own conscience. *The corrupt are a part of the human race with a human face, but they lack humanity.*

Typically, when an honest entrepreneur cheats for the first time, he can't sleep; but this happens only the first time. Similarly, when an honest bureaucrat takes a bribe for the first time, he can't sleep. Soon, he can't sleep, unless he takes the bribe.

A culture of corruption always goes top-down, never bottom-up. *Corrupt people have corrupt role models.*

One wonders if the Official Secrets Act protects secrets or the officials?

Corrupt governance suppresses freedom in the name of law and order leading to loss of trust and civil liberties. *Whether by design or by default, a citizen in a democratic system has to put up with the elected candidate.*

Indira Gandhi labelled corruption as a global phenomenon. Knowing that corruption is, has always been and is always going to coexist with people in civil society, does it justify inaction?

The big question is, why are world bodies concerned about corruption today, more than ever before? This is because corruption knows no geographical boundaries and it infects nations leading to their destruction. There are also degrees of corruption, that vary according to time and situation.

Can India, therefore, be totally corruption-free? My answer is, no, because, no country in this world is corruption-free. But corruption can definitely be minimised so that it is a fact of life rather than a way of life.

No society has ever attained 24-carat purity in honesty and

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integrity. But how can we ignore the difference between 22-carat and 8-carat purity?

Corruption has assumed geometric progression. Socialising and cultivating relationships honourably as a gesture of goodwill has become obsolete. Criminals purchasing politicians and their power has become the trend.

Chronic Corruption and its Magnitude

A villager's house was ransacked when he was away on his farm. Heart-broken, that his entire life's savings of Rs 1 lakh was robbed, he went to the police station to lodge a complaint. Exaggerating his loss, he stated in the FIR, a theft of Rs 2 lakh. That night, the robbers came to his house and asked him why he had lied that Rs 2 lakh had been looted. The man replied, "Do you take me to be a fool? I wanted to get even with you – I know that you pay commission to the police for every robbery that you commit."

Corruption is like a plague that has become widespread. Both the quality and quantity of corruption have taken on gigantic proportions. At one time, it was to the tune of a few lakhs of rupees. Today, it is a few thousand crore rupees. Corruption at one time, was limited to the police and revenue departments, but today, it has permeated into every arena, including education, sports, health care, religious institutions, etc. Transactions have grown from a few rupees to a few thousand crore rupees. A case in point is the Telgi Scam that ran into Rs 30,000 to Rs 80,000 crore. We need to ask ourselves, is the involvement limited to the underworld or does it stretch to the police and the politician too? It has become a blame game. Businessmen accuse politicians and civil servants, and they in turn, accuse the businessmen.

Corruption violates public trust, destroys the social fibre and robs people and institutions of their ideologies.

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Corruption: A National Shame

We live in a nation, where a broken father who lost his son for the country, is told by corrupt officials, "Rashtra ko diya, lekin hamein kya mila?" This refers to Prof. S.K. Nayyar's struggle against the corrupt systems in our society to get a petrol pump sanctioned. His son was martyred at the tender age of 24 years during the Kargil War."[4]

Nayyar's epic battle took him well over three years of insults, insinuations and humiliation from corrupt officials to finally get his petrol pump.

Such chronic corruption is shameful and it hurts. Shouldn't such corrupt persons' citizenships be rescinded? Is this corruption or treachery?

In corrupt countries, corruption is a way of life – people ignore it, whereas in honest countries corruption is acknowledged as something that exists as an exception and, therefore, should be done away with.

Our tolerance of petty crimes does not mean that the parties involved in them are petty criminals. It may just be that these criminals did not have an opportunity to rig up something big. Tolerance for corruption has nothing to do with caste and religion. There is an unquestioned admiration for the person with money and power. No one questions where his wealth came from. TODAY, MONEY BUYS RESPECT. Is this not moral degradation?

This has assumed epidemic proportions. Leave alone the public sector, employees in the private sector also take underhand cuts.

Benami: The Nameless and the Faceless, Yet Real

In India, it is called *benami* transactions. The concept of *benami*

[4] *The Sunday Pioneer*, 9 November 2003.

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is that a person engages in a transaction in a name other than his own. These transactions are done when a person has something to hide or feels that public knowledge of the transaction will be detrimental to him and his credibility.

Once a lady went to a cemetery office and asked for the location of her husband's grave, giving the name John Smith along with the home address. The clerk searched all his records, came back and said, "Ma'am, I am sorry. There must be a mistake at your end. We have no John Smith. But we do have a Jane Smith with the same address." The lady said, "That's it. That's my husband. I am Jane Smith. He was an accountant. He used to put everything in my name."

According to P.C. Alexander, it is the lack of a healthy political party system in a parliamentary democracy that ails India. There are 537 political parties today. So many of them with a huge variety of ideologies, makes the Indian political system a functioning anarchy. It is the hunger for power, not ideologies that brings them together. These end up serving narrow interests of castes and sub-castes. The words, "The High Command will decide", is a common phrase and there is no accountability within political parties. All alliances are based on power trading rather than ideologies. Party leaders set bad examples through the misuse and abuse of position. Groupism within parties is more important than anything else. Parties are personality-centred rather than ideology-centred. Politicians have created enough shields to protect themselves so that they are not held accountable for their misdeeds. Some politicians want only corrupt bureaucrats to work for them because they are looking for accomplices, not good professionals.

"Unprincipled ALLIANCES keep recycling old TRASH and discourage fresh TALENT."

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Cancer as a Metaphor: Lyngdoh's Diagnosis off the Mark

"When James Lyngdoh, Chief Election Commissioner, likened Indian politicians to a cancerous growth in society, did he choose his metaphor wisely?

Though the political class in this country has united across party lines in condemning Mr Lyngdoh, his outburst against politicians has struck a sympathetic chord with a large number of ordinary people, cutting across class and status. Cancer is certainly a very evocative metaphor and the manner in which politicians openly loot the country and help themselves to the numerous privileges, gives Mr Lyngdoh's statement immediate credibility.

Yet, how right is Mr Lyngdoh! Politicians are indeed like cancer. They give rise to corruption and more corruption wherever they go and in whichever arena they touch. They thrive on good people and outwit them with their cunning wiles. They tend to multiply rapidly and spread irrevocably throughout the polity, knowing no limits and respecting no organ.

Entering politics is seen as an opportunity to make money and to share the spoils with the favoured. It is, therefore, unfair to liken politicians to cancer. The metaphor of the parasite is perhaps more appropriate. A parasite feeds off its host and steadily weakens it. The host most often, does not recognise this debilitating effect, as it has also morphed in the meantime in keeping with the powerful imperatives of the parasite. The parasite grows thicker and stronger, taking over the host, and soon host and the parasite are indistinguishable. In time, the host becomes dependent on the parasite and is scared to strive towards sunlight by itself. Thus, the host and the parasite start sharing a symbiotic relationship which, as memory begins to fade, appears as if it were a law of nature.

To reiterate what has been said above, if politicians were truly

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cancerous there would be hope even then, as society would fight back, as does the cancer patient. But when politicians become parasites, the will to be free and independent of them is sapped at the core. We in India, have not only given in to politicians, but aspire to emulate them whenever we can. We want favours from them, and at the same time, patronise those below us, all in the name of pragmatism. If politicians today thrive as parasites, we must recognise that this is because we have become their willing hosts. If they were like cancer, we would still have our dignity intact, and we could still look forward to a life without the disease."[5]

I once heard a speech by Mr N. Vittal, who talked about honest and dishonest corruption, while drawing a comparison between Thailand and India. In Thailand, bribe paid for work that is to be done, is returned if the work is not accomplished. Whereas, in India, the bribe is paid whether or not the work is done.

Our definitions of honesty have changed. Nowadays, an honest person is one who takes bribe and does the work. A dishonest person is one who takes bribe and doesn't do the work. It is only a fool, who does your work without taking any bribe.

OFFICERS VIE FOR 'WET' POSTINGS

"According to the insiders, lobbying for the few 'wet' police stations is so intense that some inspectors even hire power brokers to influence the decision-makers.

These police stations, according to sources, are said to provide an enterprising station house officer an opportunity to organise an extortion racket worth over Rs 30 lakh a month."[6]

[5] Adapted from Dipankar Gupta's article in *The Times of India*, 7 January 2004.

[6] Rahul Chhabra, *The Times of India*, 16 April 2002.

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Corruption flourishes when honest citizens remain either silent or indifferent. In the commercial world, cost of corruption is factored into the pricing structure, under duress. Some profitable businesses have become sick because of corruption in the form of extortion.

Examples of Corruption

An officer who issues a licence, accepts a gift or a bribe. Issuing the licence is his job for which he earns his salary. He is not doing anyone a favour. But a gift for doing official work only whets his appetite and promotes self-interest.

Similarly, applying for a licence and receiving it is a citizen's legal right. Bribing officials in order to get a licence quickly and out of turn is illegal. Extortion assumes a completely different colour when seen in the light of corruption. Extortion takes place when the bribing party is compelled to pay up grudgingly or resentfully and he also protests against it while it happens, formally or informally. Bribing often becomes imperative to avoid inordinate delays. "What will you pay me to do your job?" This is the stock question that one encounters. A person who bribes someone, is not just paying for something that is his by right, but is at the same time, bowing to extortion.

Unless continuous pressure is maintained and we have good, honest people in governance, corruption will reappear in more sophisticated ways than ever.

In corrupt democracies, dishonest leaders run the government like a circus while behaving like monkeys.

Corruption is sometimes so well-protected that the only way to expose it is not only to participate in it but also risk being accused falsely of such participation. This is a dilemma for potential whistle-blowers. There are no guarantees – who would be given the benefit of doubt? People who sometimes look for cheap publicity or are disgruntled troublemakers, sometimes become whistle-blowers.

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Corruption: Need or Greed-Based?

We can never get rid of corruption unless we address its causes.

The more corrupt a society is, the greater is the power that rests with the corrupt. The unique point about corruption is that it occurs out of:

1. ***Scarcity: need for survival:*** Need-based corruption is the result of a condition, not perception. The only way to overcome or get rid of this kind of corruption is to address the condition that creates the need for food, shelter, clothing – the basics for survival and existence.

A society where the masses scramble for food cannot remain free.

There are no principles on an empty stomach.

– Mahatma Gandhi

2. ***Greed: lack of morality:*** Greed-based corruption is the result of faulty individual and societal values.

A survey conducted by ORG-Marg for Transparency International in India, revealed that the total amount of money paid as bribes by people in just 10 public service sectors amounted to a staggering figure of Rs 26,728 crore. Releasing the survey, Transparency International India chief, Adm. R.H. Tahiliani, said, "*These revelations are a cause for serious concern because two-thirds of the 193 lakh public servants are involved in these 10 sectors.*" The sectors surveyed were health, power, education, land, judiciary, police, taxation, public distribution system, telecom and railways.

A careful analysis of the above data shows that all 10 sectors provide services essential for basic survival. This also means that most of it is neither speed money, nor additional tax but extortion. This means, "Unless you pay me, I will make life hell for you." In

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plain English, this is called *blackmail* and holding the country to ransom. This also means that citizens have to choose between "pay or perish". Corrupt politicians work closely with greedy business people for personal gains at the cost of public welfare. Free competition, enterprise and capitalism go hand-in-hand. However, in a corrupt society connivance between the policy-makers and the greedy businessmen drains the capital.

The rich can afford to be honest, whereas the poor who are desperate, cannot. Wealth is no guarantee of morality.

What starts off as need-based corruption can turn very easily and very soon into greed-based corruption, even when one's need is satisfied.

Once George Bernard Shaw asked a socialite if she would spend a night with him for a thousand pounds. The socialite snapped back saying, "I am a respectable married woman. How dare you have the guts to ask me that?" Shaw asked, "How about ten thousand pounds?" This time she exploded, threatening to call her husband. Still persistent, he offered her a million pounds with the assurance that nobody would ever find out. This time, she said, "Perhaps."

"What if I were to offer you only ten pounds?" he asked. "Mr Shaw, you are insulting me!" the woman was shocked. "Who do you think am I?"

"We have already established who you are," he pointed out calmly, "Now we are only haggling over the price."

Do we see a similarity between the socialite and our corrupt leaders?

I am sure there is enough evidence to prove that the poor may retain their honesty regardless of their circumstances. The basic guiding principle still remains, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." In other words, "Treat others the way you want to be treated."

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The corrupt, however, define the golden rule differently, "He who has the gold makes the rules." Corruption is different from ignorance or inexperience. Those who indulge in corrupt practices, do not do so out of ignorance. They know what they do is wrong, that it goes against morality and the sense of just behaviour.

Terrorism and Corruption

At a conference against corruption in Hong Kong, a member of the Interpol, Michael Hershman, said that terrorist groups, besides having other allies, have an ally in police corruption and that there was a strong connection between corruption and terrorism.

> *The Interpol believes that where there is corruption, the risk of terrorism is greater than it would be otherwise.*
>
> – Ronald Noble, Secretary General,
> World Police Body

Noble said, "Terrorists use bribes to obtain stolen passports and get border guards to ignore them when crossing national boundaries."[7]

Corruption is the lifeline of all terrorist activities.

A corruption-free government is an implied fundamental right of every citizen.

The Consequences of Corruption

According to Shakespeare, scarecrows after a while become fixtures and don't scare the birds anymore. Realising the harmlessness of the fixture, the birds start building nests on them. Bad laws, useless laws or lack of implementation of laws become like scarecrows. They don't scare citizens anymore. Rather, the citizens start using them to their advantage.

[7] *The Economic Times*, 25 January 2003.

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Remember always that a person bought by you will also someday be bought away from you.

When the wise don't come forward and carry out their obligations to the country, the crafty and the cunning take their place.

The small minority that stands up for human dignity, meets with resistance from corrupt and unscrupulous people with ulterior motives. Many good citizens not only ignore corruption, but develop tolerance without a whimper. Corruption has led to a new breed of liaison men or contact men – their only job is to liaise.

Today, in India, not only the honest people are fed up, but the cheats and crooks are also fed up because they have to contend with even bigger cheats and crooks. Ordinary citizens don't take the risk of reporting corrupt practices, because they know that their complaints will not be followed up and that they will be victimised for having dared to complain.

Corruption is a form of illegal taxation for personal gains, resulting in major financial costs to the country, that are passed on to the public. Money and influence prevail over merit. Personal gains overpower national interest. Making money becomes more important than earning it.

Corruption: An Epidemic

Corruption makes welfare an unrealisable dream. The innocent find it hard to survive in such an environment and are penalised. It starts out small, but once it takes root, it spreads and engulfs everything. It becomes all-pervasive, and nothing works in the end without bribe or influential connections. Illegal and subversive activities become habitual. Corruption develops its own norms. Decisions are based on political favouritism and the greed of the receiver – not on the integrity of the citizen who is victimised. It is a progressively degenerating disease.

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When citizens lose respect for law or authority, they resent paying taxes and violate the law on purpose, thinking that they are getting even with the government. Why the resentment? When citizens know that the money that they pay in the form of taxes is being embezzled and not being used for what it is meant, they look for ways of violating laws. Citizens do not resent paying taxes when they know that their money is being judiciously used for what it is meant for – the welfare of the nation.

In a corrupt system, if you do everything right, it becomes wrong because you have not paid your share of bribe to the concerned party. The reverse is just as true. You could do all wrong and bribe the concerned party and everything becomes right. This is our tryst with destiny!

Money may not always work to one's benefit.

There may be other substitutes for bribe, favours like expensive gifts, providing women and paying bills and thereby trading for favours. It's common to see people in fear of the police because of their practice of extortion or false implication or imposing fines for offences not committed. Where corruption is prevalent, the police are considered as robbers in uniform and in many cases, justifiably so.

Corruption leads to an increase in rules and regulations. It delays justice, which in turn, benefits the corrupt, who are in power.

> *Where the laws are not supreme, there a demagogue springs up.*
>
> – Aristotle

When no strong measures of checks and balances are in place, most people feel that corrupt practices enjoy the tacit approval of the government. When chaos receives the seal of approval from the corrupt, it becomes an acceptable norm.

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Corruption and crime are synonymous.

Corrupt societies become silent witnesses to their own degeneration. Citizens fill their pockets without shame. They feel that this is their only protection against an uncertain future. They believe that they can either help themselves this way or face a life of poverty. Citizens refrain from reporting crime as they fear that the person they will report to will probably be a party to it.

Corruption has a chain reaction – people at the top start the process to satisfy their greed. Greed causes economic problems by creating artificial scarcity. Economic problems thus create corruption out of need, and the cycle, thus, goes on and on.

Corruption takes roots from birth.

Bribing the authorities, to get a birth certificate or falsifying them is the first exposure to dishonesty in society, and the practice of it certainly makes perfect. By the time the child is an adult, he has seen and practised enough of it. The child has habitually learnt to live not within the law, but by bypassing it.

Corruption leads to a lack of humanity and compassion.

The lack of compassion and humanity is evident in incidents of food supplies being diverted to the black market during flood and famine, instead of reaching the victims. This causes starvation and death in the affected areas. Criminal activity on such a massive scale can't be carried out without the connivance of influential people in positions of power. In corrupt countries, a citizen has to bribe the hospital even to save a bleeding patient. What inhumanity!

Weak people can never be sincere and cowards can never practise morality.

Corruption has become an industry.

Corruption, if allowed to grow, is so insidious that it becomes not

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only a part of the industry, but an industry in itself. Falsification of documents and disappearance of files is common practice in government offices.

Those who do not prevent crime when they can, encourage and perpetuate it.

We get the kind of government we deserve.

Political activity is the highest responsibility of every citizen. A corrupt leader can't wipe out corruption. When money speaks – truth holds its silence. The lack of values in the leader, encourages corruption. Countries like Singapore, that have successfully fought against corruption, have had the leadership and the strength of will to succeed, no matter how fierce the fight.

In our country, moral life is shaken to its foundation.

– Dr S. Radhakrishnan

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Who Pays the Price?

In a corrupt society, bureaucracy brings forth corruption of the people, by the people, for the people.

CORRUPTION AND POVERTY

A bus was passing through a lonely stretch on a long-distance journey. A gang of robbers attacked it. The gang robbed the passengers of their money and belongings and collected the loot in a bundle. After some distance, the bus screeched to a halt again. The bus driver said, "It's the same robbers again." One of the passengers said angrily, "What do they want now? We have nothing left to give." The chief robber came inside the bus and apologised to the passengers for robbing them. He requested them to take back their stuff. Surprised, a passenger asked, "But why in the world would you return your loot?" The chief replied, "This is no trade-off. The commission we'd have to give to the police for this loot, is more than what we have collected."

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COMMON ELEMENTS IN ALL TYPES OF CORRUPTION

- Private interest gets priority over public interest.
- Breach of trust.
- Violation of duty and public welfare.
- Lack of transparency.
- Deception of society.
- It involves mutual connivance as more than one party is involved.

Forms of Corruption

(a) Individuals bring in corruption, in different ways. Some through treachery and others through injustice, oppression and tyranny, depending on what they can get away with.

(b) A public servant accepts gifts even though he may be aware that these have been given to him with the purpose of influencing his decision in favour of the giver.

(c) The demand of gifts to discharge public duty is known as extortion.

(d) Using public funds or office for personal benefits is known as embezzlement.

Example 1: Appointing relatives or friends to public offices, regardless of merit.

Example 2: A bank issues a large loan without enough security. Cost of loan: add 10 per cent to the amount as bribe for the top officers.

Double standards are deeply-entrenched in a corrupt society. There are procedures for everything – official and unofficial. The entry can be from the front or the back door.

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Our personal lives are also not free from corruption. We face corruption in:

(a) Admissions to schools and colleges.

(b) To acquire licences and permits.

(c) During tax assessments (taxes can be reduced on payment of a fee).

Questions for a Corrupt Society

1. What legacy are we then leaving behind for our children?
2. How do you find people with character, courage and honesty?

Injustice leads to frustration. We have so much of it in our country, that it has now become a breeding ground for terrorist activities. People now have to resort to self-defence, just to survive. To the powerful, there is nothing that cannot be provided even inside the jail – of course, at a price.

STEPS FOR THE ELIMINATION OF CORRUPTION

The objective in fighting corruption is to bring in a just and equitable society. Every person, in order to be a good citizen, must have a need for devotion to something other than himself or herself, and commitment to a purpose in life. Patriotic and trustworthy people must come into positions of decision-making.

> *A good citizen should run for office, stand for office, but not lie for office.*

Elimination of corruption needs more than mere legal and administrative measures. It needs moral upgradation. We talk of religion – every religion condemns bribery, stealing, cheating and

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killing. Why don't we practice what we believe in? Obviously we either don't believe in it or we have double standards.

What we need is upright minds.

To start the process towards building a clean society, the country's principled patriots, with high morals, need to come forward and act to enforce rational and efficient laws.

The right to have rights is the basic right of a citizen without which a person is stateless, disgraced and degraded.

Good character is the moral strength of democracy, and this alone can give meaning to life. Integrity must be an essential prerequisite for any official to qualify for a job. Efficiency alone is not enough and it is no guarantee against corruption. The fundamental moral principles have to relate to the problems of human misery, and these principles can't be thought of without referring to corruption and injustice.

Another remedy for corruption is to appoint a neutral investigating authority.

A neutral agency can awaken the morale of the public. We may need an agency of firefighters who go from state to state, cleaning up the system. With direct powers from the PMO, it would employ our most honest and talented people and would be independent and immune to influence by the perpetrators. We love to watch such 'super-cops' in our films, so why can't we have them in real life? The more success that this agency would enjoy, the more secure the common man would feel. We could then, turn the tables on corruption.

The press can also play a very important role in awakening the country. Whilst we don't have as free a press as we deserve and many of our special interests are not protected, there are sections of the media that fight injustice and corruption. We need to

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encourage these journalists, editors and owners to raise the level of their crusade against crime and to increase awareness amongst the people. There should be no place to hide.

Courageous men, who have been inspired by great role models, have brought positive changes to history. These men created a strong and aggressive public opinion against corruption.

What is required is a mass awakening amongst the citizens to eliminate poverty, corruption, injustice and oppression. Is this achievable?

The French Revolution is prime example of citizens' movements. Unless every citizen is willing to become a soldier for his nation, the nation would remain a slave to the corrupt.

A crucial factor is honest, patriotic leadership that can put national interest ahead of individual interest. No structural or legal change to fight corruption can succeed unless a large number of individuals with high moral values occupy key positions.

A society becomes violent where exploitation is the essence of existence.

Corruption violates public trust and eats into the social capital.

"An EXIM Bank report showed that bribery adds approximately 25 per cent to the cost of products exported from India."[1]

The cost of bribes paid, has to be factored into the business model because there is no choice. The cost, of course is ultimately borne by the consumer and finally the nation.

The war against corruption is the biggest war for any society, and humanity.

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[1] N. Vittal, *Corruption in India,* Chief Vigilance Commission, p. 46.

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Corruption bleeds the nation to death. It kills initiative, destroys entrepreneurship and wastes resources, the greatest waste being that of human resource.

The PHD Chamber of Commerce, recently came up with a study that said, if the corruption level in India comes down by 15 per cent, the GDP growth will improve by 1.3 per cent and investment will go up by 2.9 per cent of the GDP.[2]

Fighting corruption may actually prove to be more important than waging a war on our geographical boundaries. Corruption is an enemy inside that stabs the soldier in the back. It is so much easier to deal with an external enemy.

Why is it a common practice to indulge in cash transactions? Because cash is generally black money.

We need to sensitise and educate people at all levels about how we are all paying for the ill-effects of corruption. When we allow ourselves to become victims of bribery, we suffer from:

1. Decline in national health
2. Increase in medical cost and disability
3. Terrorism
4. Spurious drugs
5. Adulterated food
6. Life-threatening infrastructure
7. Adulterated drinking water
8. Air and water pollution

It is said that if the corruption from power sector is removed, the price of the power will go down by 40 per cent. This means that the Indian citizen today is paying 40 per cent extra for the power he is using because of corruption.[3]

[2] N. Vittal, *The Citizens' Guide to Promote Integrity*, CVC.
[3] N. Vittal, *The Citizens' Guide to Promote Integrity*, CVC.

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The corrupt person always needs an accomplice.

A study has shown that in Delhi alone five lakh vendors and cycle rickshaw pullers pay a bribe of Rs 40 to 50 crore per month to various authorities including the police and municipal authorities because of the licensing regime. The CVC has taken up the matter with the Chief Minister of Delhi, the Union Urban Development Minister as well as the Chief Secretary of Delhi, the Municipal Commissioner, MCD and Chairman, NDMC.[4]

The honest have a value, the corrupt have a price.

No legacy is as rich as honesty.

– William Shakespeare

Corruption makes a mockery of human rights. A corrupt bureaucrat treats the bribe paying and non-bribe paying public differently for accomplishing the same work. Corruption flourishes because those in power benefit from the corrupt system. But sadly enough, they are the ones who not only wield the power but are also responsible for checking corruption.

Power corrupts the few. Weakness corrupts the many.

– Eric Hoffer

SHAPING PUBLIC OPINION

In a democratic society, public leaders are supposed to be the servants of the people. Political leaders have to respect public opinion, because they hold public trust. Hence they become public property and are accountable to them. Shaping public opinion through all forms of media is crucial.

[4] CVC's Report, p. 55.

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According to *The Citizens' Guide to Promote Integrity* (Central Vigilance Commission) a study conducted once, showed that over 80 per cent people are passive and that they don't lodge complaints against corrupt practices when faced with them. Interestingly, even government employees (close to 50 per cent) accepted having paid bribe at one time or another. About two-thirds of the people, whose opinion was documented, thought that corruption was real.

The extent of black money is placed at 40 per cent of the GDP.[5]

Corruption is an outcome of the risk-and-reward ratio with rewards being great and the risk minimal. When the rewards become greater than the risk, corruption begins. Low risk encourages people to become corrupt. Look at it from the other side. For an honest person (who wants to fight corruption), it becomes a high-risk and low-reward proposition. Hence, they become part of the system. In the long-run corruption is detrimental to the whole society.

Robert P. Beschel, Jr., in his comparative analysis of successful prosecution of corrupt offenders in Hong Kong and the Philippines observed, "A person committing a corrupt offence in Hong Kong was 35 times more likely to be detected and punished than his counterpart in the Philippines."[6]

INDIAN POLITICS

In the middle of a dispute, a man told a politician, "Let's not quarrel. Let's discuss the matter sensibly." The politician said, "No, every time I discuss matters sensibly, I lose."

This is how Indian politicians behave.

[5] Government of India, CVC, Annexure 6, Item 3, p. 82.
[6] Robert P. Beschel, Jr, *Curbing Corruption in Asia*, Eastern Universities Press, p. 99.

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"Social analysts, notably Francis Fukuyama and Robert Putnam, have argued that societies with a high level of trust tend to prosper. There, people tend to be honest, adhere to promises and respect contracts. Faster growth is not just a consequence of appropriate economic policy, savings rate, human capital and fiscal deficits but, somewhat surprisingly, *the level of honesty in the citizenry*."[7]

Corruption is undoubtedly a global phenomenon. But in a society that sides with honesty, a corrupt person goes to prison, whereas in an environment of dishonesty, he gets a promotion. The application of this logic meant that the Japanese Prime Minister went to prison and the Italian Prime Minister was exiled for being corrupt.

Leadership is either good or bad. It is never neutral. *Good leaders lead, bad leaders mislead. Good leaders guide, bad leaders misguide.*

[7] N. Vittal, *Corruption in India*, p. 30.

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Justice and Governance

Economic prosperity rests on the foundation of an honest, clean judicial system. When the judicial system becomes sluggish, it automatically becomes costly and inaccessible. Hence, it goes beyond the reach of a common citizen. In such societies, courts of law instead of being temples of justice, become shelters for the crooks to take cover.

At times, one needs to take a stand, not to defy the wrong, but more, because one wants to defend the right.

There is a difference between a contract and a covenant. A contract is maintained through an external force of law, whereas a covenant has an internal moral basis and is maintained through loyalty and responsibility. A contract can be discontinued when it is not mutually beneficial, whereas a covenant binds people more deeply. It is based not on interest, but on integrity, loyalty and commitment. A society gives rise to institutions such as the state, government,

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nation, etc., whereas covenants give rise to family, communities, associations and traditions. Rights are a legal concept, whereas duties are a moral concept. Matters which were previously handled by a society through an informal code of civility, decency and honour, have now become written procedures. A civil society constitutes a moral domain. There are more covenants than contracts, which means social interest is held as being above self-interest. People learn to value others through integrity, loyalty and winning their trust, because that is the only way families and communities survive. Today, however, conflicts are resolved more through litigation than civility. How have other nations overcome such a crisis – through contracts or covenants? Some have successfully resolved the crisis and some have not.

Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the presence of justice.

GOOD PEOPLE: CITIZENS AND COURAGE

There's an ancient Indian story about a mouse who was constantly distressed because it was afraid of cats. A magician took pity on it and turned it into a cat. Immediately, it started fearing dogs. The magician, therefore, turned it into a dog. Now the dog began to fear the tiger. So the magician turned it into a tiger. Right away, it began to fear the hunter. Finally, the magician was so disgusted that he turned the tiger back into a mouse and said, "You've got the heart of a mouse. That's what you are and therefore you shall remain just that."

No society has enough jails, policemen or courts to enforce a law without the support of good people. Having laws that cannot be or are not obeyed, leads to a loss of respect for all laws.

A bright-looking young man sat at a meeting, heckling a crooked politician. Finally, the politician couldn't ignore him any more

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and said, "For all your disagreements with me, will you kindly stand up and tell the audience what good you have done for the city?" The young man got up and said, "I voted against you in the last election."

Indian politicians through their intellect have created the theory of propose and oppose. When not in power, oppose everything and propose nothing.

"A former submarine captain-turned-pastor was one of the few who spoke openly against what Hitler was doing. Hitler, therefore, hated him with passion. Martin Niemoller, the submarine captain, had to be silenced.

Eventually, the knock came at his door and he was taken by the SS troops and put in a prison. On 7 February 1938, Martin was to face his accusers in court. He was a man who was beginning an ordeal that he neither deserved nor should have faced.

Niemoller was acquitted of the charges that had been levelled against him, yet he was imprisoned for more than seven years. 'On what charges do we send a man to prison who has been acquitted?' the prosecutor asked Hitler. The Fuehrer replied, 'He is my personal prisoner!'

A person who commits himself to anything worthwhile, will always experience the hostility of those who stand for nothing. The reward for a show of courage is not that you always have your way, but that you know you have done the right thing.

Do you know of others who have done right at a tremendous cost?"[1]

Moderation in the pursuit of justice, is no virtue.

– Barry Goldwater

[1] Harold J. Sala, *Heroes: People Who Made a Difference in Our World,* Promise Press, p. 159–61.

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Bad governance first sets a society on fire and then spends all its time fighting the flames. This is their idea of crisis management. An irresponsible government is blind to the discontent of its people. Like a mad bull it attacks anyone who dares stand in its path. Corruption in every administration always starts with either the wrong principles, or a complete lack of them.

Criminalisation of Politics

The criminalisation of politics is the result of either the inadequacy, or the failure of the judiciary. Law is based on the premise that a person is innocent till proven guilty. If a case drags on for 25 years, a criminal can remain free, contest elections and become a Member of Parliament because he has not been proven guilty.

Buying time gives criminals enough opportunity to destroy evidence.

Injustice to anyone is a threat to justice for everyone.

The working of the legal process in a corrupt society is such that it punishes the innocent, but not the influential. In such societies, investigative agencies, witnesses, the bench, the bar and executive machinery can all be easily bought by those who can afford to buy them. False confessions are obtained from the innocent through inhuman torture and dishonest people who abuse power and frame others for their own selfish gains.

BAD GOVERNANCE IS EQUAL SHARING OF MISERIES

> "*Take away justice, and what you have left in a state is nothing but a bunch of robbers.*"
>
> –Unknown

Many governments are being run by people who are incapable of governing and unfit to be trusted. Foolish governance results in

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laws that dampen individual effort and initiative, destroy ambition and penalise success.

Our laws certainly harass the poor – the innocent villager who cuts a dried branch off a tree to cook his next meal is fined, whereas the laws do not stop the influential from using the best wood for their fancy furniture.

Good governance does not work when corruption floods politicians with extorted, stooged or undeserving money. Government then, becomes inhuman. The greatest evil in any society is when the government does not do its job properly.

Where lawlessness becomes the law, honest citizens become cheats, crooks and dacoits.

What qualifications do people need to lead a nation when serving people is their objective:

1. Insight and Intellect.
2. Values and Vision.

They need to put the nation's interest above their own. They also need certain levels of academics that would give them the ability to analyse and comprehend problems. Why? Because 90 per cent of the solution lies in identifying properly the problem.

Bad governance doesn't discriminate, it ill-treats everyone equally.

The concept of a committee emerged from the philosophy that two heads are better than one. In other words, you want to take advantage of **collective wisdom**, meaning that five wise people could come up with an idea which may not emerge from one individual. However, there is an implicit assumption that there are five wise people.

Suppose you reverse it. What would you have if you had five

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ignorant people in your committee? It would only result in **collective ignorance**. After all, five donkeys don't make one race horse and five ignorant men don't make one wise man.

The following story says it all:

To celebrate their founder's day, one division of a company challenged another division to a boat race. The eventful day came. Both teams were charged with excitement. From the beginning the guest team took the lead and maintained it.

The challengers lost. Embarrassed the CEO of the challenging division appointed a committee to determine why they had lost and how they could win in future. The committee met several times. Its preliminary findings were that the guest team had cheated as they had ten men rowing and only one steering whereas their team had one man rowing and ten giving directions. The CEO asked for concrete suggestions on how to improve performance. Several months and several meetings later the committee came back with its recommendation; "Our rower has to improve his rowing speed."

Bad laws are the worst examples of oppression and tyranny. Where corruption becomes a way of life, freedom cannot exist. Making people dependent on the government is not social progress. Good citizens don't rely on the government; government instead relies on them.

> *The history of liberty is the history of resistance – it is the history of limitation of governmental power.*
>
> – Woodrow Wilson

ACTION *v.* INACTION

Positive thinking without positive action ends in zero result.

Our priests continuously rave and rant, "Everything is an illusion." The following story makes a good point.

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Once, a preacher sat preaching deep in the forest. He was telling his students that everything is an illusion. Suddenly, they heard a lion roar. Everybody, including the preacher, ran and took shelter. Some of the students climbed a tree. After the lion strolled away into the jungle, everybody came back to safety. One of the students asked, "Swamiji, if everything is an illusion, why did you climb a tree?" The Swami had no answer. "Your climbing the tree, was that also an illusion", asked the student?

Denying and ignoring facts do not make them disappear.

France's Disengaged Workforce

"Gallup calculated the percentages within the total French workforce for three categories of employees: 12 per cent are 'enagaged', or loyal, productive, and psychologically committed to their work; 57 per cent are 'not engaged', employees who aren't psychologically committed to their roles; and 31 per cent are 'actively disengaged', or disenchanted with their work-places."[2]

I am not aware of any such survey conducted in India. But I wonder, where we would stand, if such a survey *was* in fact conducted here.

Our ignorance and inaction have taken away our freedom. Once lost, freedom is not easy to regain.

Scores of people unfortunately suffer from inaction, i.e. they often have the right intent but they forget to pull the trigger. Many shirk responsibility by pleading ignorance. Responsibility means doing the right thing at the right time without having to be told to do so. In order to fulfil our total responsibility, we must ensure prompt action. The objective of taking a courageous stand is to resolve challenges rather than prolong indecision. Before we start looking

[2] Article by Francois Momal in *National Review*, December 2003, p. 90.

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for the answers, we need to ascertain that we have the right questions. Do we understand the issues that confront us?

Knowing what's right and doing what's right are two different things. Knowing what's right and not doing it is lack of commitment. Not knowing what's right and, hence, not doing it, is ignorance. The greatest ignorance is, not to be aware of one's ignorance. Such ignorance cannot be excused as an example of innocence because it can be a source of great pain and misery, not only for us, but also for the coming generations.

A nation suffers when popular opinions become more important than values and justice.

Inability to prevent injustice should not stop a good citizen to protest against injustice. A good citizen gives voice to the voiceless.

Any social system that hurts an honest citizen is antiquated and needs to be re-assessed. Unfortunately, in a corrupt social set-up honest citizens who want to assert their rights are often branded as troublemakers. This precipitates a social crisis.

If standing up for one's rights is a crime, then every freedom fighter and most social workers are criminals. We need to understand that, if standing up for humanity is a crime, then every citizen must strive to be a criminal. There is a difference between a freedom fighter and a terrorist. A terrorist terrorises and attacks civilians and the innocent. Ronald Reagen's administration brought out the difference clearly, "Freedom fighters confine their attacks only to security forces who were in a position to defend themselves. Terrorist were those who killed innocent civilians."

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A brave man, who is indifferent, is no better than a coward.

DEMOCRACY AND US

Democracy is all about "WHO SHALL GOVERN" and "WITH WHAT OBJECTIVE". Self-discipline is the result of education and training which is a prerequisite for citizens' to make enlightened choices. In a free democracy, people are supposed to have the right to overthrow oppression, tyranny and corruption.

Democracy does not mean a government of the ill-educated, elected by the uneducated to govern the indifferent. If the elected are fools, then the electors are bigger fools to have elected them. Democracy presupposes that its citizens are enlightened and competent enough to govern themselves, or select and elect responsible leaders and officials to govern them.

Are our politicians so devious or the people so ignorant/ gullible that they never look beyond the obvious?

For democracy to be meaningful, it must strive to be more than just an election time event; it must become a way of life for each citizen. Each citizen must understand his rights and responsibilities and the power of collective action.

> *It is wrong to ask who will rule. The ability to vote a bad government out of office is enough. That is democracy.*
>
> – Karl Popper

For a government and a responsible democracy to survive, citizens must weed out the evil of ignorance. People do not live only to fight evil – they need to have a positive purpose in life to make it meaningful.

To cure injustice, poverty and ignorance the state must either reform itself, or be prepared to face a revolution.

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"One of the most brutal tales of woman empowerment has been scripted in Nagpur's Kasturbanagar. Tired of suffering rape and terror unleashed by a local goonda, 150 women of the locality caught hold of him in the courtroom, dismembered him, sliced his genitals and stoned him to death. Shielded by the police, the slumlord had left a trail of rape, intimidation and extortion in the 10 years of his criminal career. The rough and ready justice administered to Akku by his victims has struck a chill in the hearts of his gangmen who are now either underground or thinking of alternate careers.

The women who killed Akku have become the toast of the town; their unity and solidarity is being quoted as a living example of courage; their angry outburst being justified as the retribution for their long life of frustration and fear. The act itself, howsoever violent, is getting lionised as a revolution against an impotent and corrupt police force, as also an answer to the malaise in the judiciary."[3]

I recently addressed a group at Nagpur and somebody said, "The Nagpur incident of killing of the criminal in the Court by the women was a slap on Indian governance, law and order situtation and judiciary." My reply was, "It is not a slap on any of these. It is a slap to those brothers who get rakhi tied on their wrist with the commitment to protect their sisters. It is a slap to those husbands who take the oath at the time of marriage that they would protect their wives. It is a slap to those cowards who do not have the guts to protect the dignity of womenfolk in a cultured society."

When capable citizens refuse to take part in politics and government, they condemn themselves and other citizens to the punishment of living under an unjust and unfair government.

[3] *The Pioneer*, 22 August 2004.

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Democracy is supposed to give people the right to question and to remedy concerns like:

1. Rights of the children to basic care, support, and educational, physical and medical needs.
2. Rights of the innocent who await fair trial for years.
3. Rights of ordinary taxpayers who deserve a functioning system of utilities and crime enforcement.
4. Rights of every parent to see that their children have access to decent and basic education.
5. Ability of the government to support those who cannot support themselves, such as the poor, the infirm and the elderly.
6. Rights of victims of poverty who struggle from youth to old age, waiting for death.

DECAY TO DESTRUCTION

A frog was dropped into boiling water. The drastic change in temperature and the sudden shock made the frog jump out, and he thus survived and was free. Another frog was put in water at room temperature and the container was put on the stove. The temperature rose gradually. The frog could not feel the difference in temperature for a long time. By the time it did, it was too late. The frog died. Democracies in the same way, are not destroyed overnight, but are gradually killed.

Political Deception

Someone once said, "Our politicians are acting like fools." His friend replied, "They are not acting."

An editor of a weekly newspaper wrote a headline, "Half of our legislators are crooks." Many local politicians objected strongly and asked him to retract his statement. The editor wrote, with an apology, in the next edition of the newspaper, 'Half of our legislators are not crooks."

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Our government is trying to bring in reforms with the help of the very same people who have a vested interest to oppose them. One politician outwits the other. No wonder India is missing out on so many global opportunities.

The director of an orphanage went to a politician to ask for help. The politician, in order to get rid of him said, "I'll do whatever I can." Two weeks later, he sent the director two orphans!

Our politicians hate telling their electorate the truth. They go in for expediency and quick fixes. They go for short-term gains at the time of long-term pain.

For a devious person, the crooked path always looks straight.

Political Participation

One cannot expect a nation to grow without the involvement of concerned citizens in political life. No nation can be exploited without the consent of its citizens. Vested interests demonstrate a conspiracy against the nation. A society of sheep is heading for destruction when it is governed by wolves.

It is no good when citizens of a nation only complain and expect someone else to fix their problems.

Power by Position

Positions and titles give power. Take away the title and the power evaporates into thin air. Position gives authority and authority gives power, but only good behaviour begets respect. People who are obsessed with social status and titles are usually the least deserving.

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Any title or position of power, unless built on justice cannot endure. Pseudo-leaders are especially spineless and can walk only with the help of the crutch of authority. Greatness lies not only in being strong, but equally in the right and proper use of that strength.

A politician was invited to be the chief guest by an auto manufacturing plant. After the inaugural ceremony, they took a round of the factory and as the politician was leaving, the chairman of the plant presented a car to him as a goodwill gesture. The politician refused it saying, "It's against my principles to take expensive gifts as it amounts to bribe. I don't mind taking a discount, but I will not take anything for free." The chairman said, "If you really feel so strongly about it, I will subsidise the rate and charge you a token fee for the car. Give me five bucks for the car."

The politician pulled out fifty bucks from his pocket and gave it to the chairman and said, "Well, in that case, I shall take ten cars."

Lack of ethics in leaders is the root cause of the destruction of a nation and its people.

SOLUTIONS

Here are some solutions that can help us rebalance our society:

- A system that treats everyone with equality.
- A system that dispenses justice on a timebound basis.
- Punishment ought to be transparent and commensurate with the crime committed.
- Legislative decisions should not be made to appease the vote bank.

What we need is a system where crime does not pay. Rather, criminals must pay a bigger price for their actions. All the above

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solutions are not new. They have been written about or spoken of by countless people. In this context, the following questions come to mind:

1. Why are we not doing it?
2. Where do we get started?

We need to be a country that creates heroes, and we need our heroes to become role models. Our greatest problem today is not poverty, but the existence of ignorance, indifference and injustice. Our society needs the philosophy of "Unite and Rule". Appeasement or stop-gap arrangements in order to deal with these problems without addressing the real issues are both dangerous and short-lived.

How can we be involved?

As an individual or a corporate, we can:

Think Indian. Stop thinking regional!

Be prepared for *struggle* and *hardship*. Freedom is never given. It is always taken.

Take a stand. Stop sitting on the fence. Support one principled leader or party and stop playing one against the other.

An eminent philosopher's house was flooded, with rain water. He started theorising, trying to understand the situation. After a few a minutes, his son came in with a mop and said, "Dad, this is not the time to philosophise. Pick up the mop and start working."

> *In Germany they came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionist, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up*

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because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up.

– Martin Niemoeller (1892-1984). German theologian imprisoned throughout World War II. Attributed

THERE IS A COST OF ACTION AND THERE IS A COST OF INACTION. GUESS WHICH ONE IS MORE EXPENSIVE?

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13

Tradition or Hypocrisy?

Why is it important to pass tradition from one generation to the next? It is because moral experiences take time to mature, sometimes more than the lifetime of a single generation. It took hundreds of years for mankind to learn that slavery was morally unacceptable or that men and women should be treated with equal dignity.

> "*Society is the partnership, not only among those who are living, but also between those who are dead and those who are yet to be born.*"
>
> – Edmund Burque

Traditions are like a magnificent, ancient monument. We inherit the building from our parents. We want to leave it in a good condition for our children. They may change it, but as its guardians, we must teach our children why it was built and how it was changed, so that if and when they redo its structure, it will be constructive and not destructive.

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RICH TRADITION

The task of education is not only to pass on tradition and culture, but also to enhance the consciousness of choices. Whenever we need to learn a skill, we have to go through the following process:

1. Watch the master carefully.
2. Learn, practice, and gain proficiency.

The relationship between the teacher and the taught presupposes authority, obedience, discipline, persistence and practice.

Something to be admired about the Sikhs is that they never let themselves forget the sacrifices made by their Gurus. Their prayers start and finish with:

1. Gratitude for those who sacrificed, and
2. The commitment to stay on the paths shown by the Guru.

Sikhism is based on three pillars:

1. ***Kirat karni*** (dignity of labour):
   - No work is too small to be done.
   - Take pride in doing hard-work that helps you earn an honest living.

   The result: You will hardly ever find a Sikh who is a beggar.
2. ***Vand chakna:*** The fruits of honest, hard-work should be shared with those who are less fortunate in life. This is the concept of *langar.*

   The result: No matter what time someone goes to a *gurudwara*, he can always get something to eat. Share with our fellowmen, whatever He gives us, for it is a gift for all.
3. ***Naam japna:*** We always pray to God because He is the Supreme Giver.

   The result: We are all children of God. Sikhism teaches universal brotherhood.

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Another great practice is that of Seva: The concept of *seva* comes out of humility and equality regardless of status or wealth. A true Sikh, without hesitation, cleans the floor and utensils and handles shoes in the *gurudwara*. A large heart is better than a swollen head.

According to our Indian scriptures, our economic welfare (*artha*) should be guided by and stay within the framework of the moral code (*dharma*).

WHAT A GREAT FOUNDATION!

Forgiveness Celebrated

Jainism practices forgiveness as a part of their spiritual behaviour. Once a year, people call on one another and apologise for any mistakes committed advertently or inadvertently.

The concept of asking for forgiveness and forgiving applies to those whose conscience is not dead. Life is too short to carry on with grudges. Negative feelings like guilt, revenge and anger are detrimental to our daily living. They are the prime causes of stress and result in physical and emotional problems. They are like excess baggage that a person carries with him and are detrimental not only to the giver but the receiver as well. If a person who has made a mistake, be it honest or deliberate, apologises, his heart feels light. The one who forgives feels light as well because he has let go of a grudge. Grudges have a negative cumulative effect and they bring down the energy levels of a person.

Forgiveness implies empathy and compassion, fairness and justice, based on the premise that nobody is perfect. We are all human and make mistakes. However, forgiving crookedness and cunningness may display gullibility and may indirectly encourage the wrong.

Forgiveness means that a relationship, whether personal or

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professional starts on a clean slate. However, this is not a licence to start the process of mistakes all over again. Mistakes of omission are worthy of being forgiven, but mistakes of commission are not.

Self-Forgiving and Forgiving Others

Forgiveness always starts with self. We can only give what we have. Unless we forgive ourselves, how can we forgive others. Many times, we keep punishing ourselves for our past mistakes more than others punish us, by retaining guilt and resentment. We need to learn from our past mistakes and we should not be repeating them.

THREADS THAT BIND TOGETHER

When Draupadi saw Lord Krishna's thumb bleeding, she tore a piece of her saree to bandage it. Time went by and many years later, when Draupadi was being disrobed publicly by the Kauravas, she prayed to Lord Krishna for protection. He came to her rescue, making her saree infinitely long and saved her honour. Today, thousands of years later, women ask their brothers to be their protectors and in return tie a symbolic thread, the ***rakhee***, on the latter's wrists. Draupadi's gesture towards Lord Krishna has become a deep-rooted tradition in India.

Lord Krishna's message was very clear. Whenever anyone sees the respect and dignity of a woman being threatened, it becomes the duty of every person to protect it.

UNARMED OR DISARMED

Arjuna was the disciple of Lord Krishna. Lord Krishna asked Arjuna to shoot Karna with his arrows during the epic battle of Kurukshetra. But Arjuna refused, saying that it was against his principle of bravery to strike an unarmed person. Lord Krishna

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quickly interjected, "Karna is not unarmed, he is disarmed and there is a big difference between the two. A few minutes ago, he was shooting at you. He has been disarmed by your strength. Shoot!" Arjuna shot and killed Karna.

Is it chivalry or bravery to give a second chance to a person who is out there to destroy you? Isn't it foolishness to let such a person go scot-free, especially when the line between justice and injustice is so clearly demarcated?

In Indian tradition, the status of the teacher is considered to be as high as that of God because the teacher shows the direction to right conduct. Seeing Arjuna depressed, Lord Krishna through his message, motivated Arjuna by giving clarity of direction to do his duty under adverse circumstances. '*Dharma*' stands for duty.

GANESH PUJA

Very often the commencement of a new assignment is preceded by an invocation to Lord Ganesha. There is a positive aspect to it. It means that a job "well begun is half done", which holds true in real- life too. Anything well begun shows preparation, rather than a fatalistic attitude and your job is well on its way to completion. One should not merely try and attempt, but commit to doing the job well. This stands true in our personal, professional and social lives also. Half-hearted attempts don't work.

LAKSHMI PUJA

Lakshmi Puja is a ritual practiced pretty much in most Hindu families. I wonder if people, who recite all the *mantra*s and *shloka*s, understand what is being said, or even if the so-called priests understand what they recite.

Going back forty years, what my mother taught me as the meaning

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of Laxmi Puja seems to be an universal truth. She said, "It means six things:

1. We thank God for what He has given us so that we can live with respect and dignity.
2. We pray to God to continue to give us enough wealth and prosperity to live with dignity.
3. Any wealth that comes into our house must be earned and only through honourable means, i.e. no ill-gotten wealth should enter our house.
4. When we acquire wealth and prosperity, it must be put to use only for honourable purposes.
5. Our wishes and prayers are answered only when they harmonise with our actions. If we wish and pray one thing and behave differently, we could pray forever and yet our prayers would remain.
6. Our scriptures teach us to be a *karmayogi* and not practice *karmachori*."

People nowadays, don't perform Lakshmi Puja; instead they worship the person who has Lakshmi. The saddest part in human life is when people want to make money without earning it. That's when they start compromising on values.

DEVI PUJA

When God realised he could not be present everywhere, He created the mother!

We talk of our rich culture and we quote from the *Ramayana* at the drop of a hat. We glorify the ideals of Rama but behave like Ravana. Goddesses in temples are worshipped with great fervour and are dressed in expensive clothes provided by devotees. Some

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hypocritical devotees, worship the Goddesses and then go out, disrobe and dishonour other people's wives and daughters.

POSITION OF WOMEN

"The typical village woman in northern India receives her inheritance at birth: that of being an unwanted burden, because she is not a son. She comes from a peasant family that owns less than an acre of land, or from a landless family whose existence depends on a landlord's whim. She can neither read nor write, though often she would like to do both. She has rarely travelled more than twenty miles from the village of her birth. If she falls ill, she believes it is because of evil spirits lurking in trees. Her sole worth lies in producing sons and working in the fields – for a meal and the equivalent of fifty cents a day. She is born into a caste, a geography, and a poverty from which there is no escape. Once she marries, at fourteen or fifteen, her life is fixed: her future becomes her mother's past. In her village, practically everything will turn into caste, the refined form of apartheid introduced into India over 2,500 years ago. Its Brahmanical order will define, with few exceptions, the social, economic, and occupational status she will have for her entire life. Caste etiquette will specify what she and her family may eat, how her marriage will be performed, the length of her sari and what ornaments she may wear, whether or not she may draw water from the village well, and through which door she may enter a a temple – if she may enter at all. Caste even determines whether or not a man may carry an umbrella in 'the real India'."[1]

"*Sixty per cent rapes are of minors.*"[2]

Is this the way to treat our womenfolks?

[1] Mary Anne Weaver, India's Bandit Queen, A saga of revenge – and making of a legend of "the real India", theatlantic.com

[2] *Hindustan Times*, 11 October 2003.

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"A woman is raped every 54 minutes in India. Sex-related crimes are on the increase."[3]

Are we doing justice to the words, "Jai Mata Di!"

"When a mother and her four-year-old daughter from Bulandshahar were wheeled into the ICU of AIIMS after a night of unimaginable torture unleashed by in-laws demanding dowry, the Capital was shocked. Today, close to 15,000 women succumb to dowry torture annually and burning is just one aspect."[4]

Treating womenfolk with respect and dignity is the true meaning of "*Jai Mata Di!*"

Our Trains Are Unsafe, Women Tell Railway Brass

"In the recent past, a mentally-challenged girl has been raped in full view of passengers in a Mumbai local, a TTE has raped a teenager in an AC compartment of a Mumbai-bound train near Mathura, and a girl from the North-East and several from Jammu and Kashmir have been molested on trains passing through Bihar.

The National Commission of Women delegation made the following submissions:

- It's very difficult to file an FIR after a crime on railway premises. There's too much procedural delay.
- Railway staff are frequently drunk on duty, even during the day. They inspire no confidence."[5]

Selfishness and the cowardice of fellow passengers cost 21-year-old Manish Mishra his life when he was thrown out from the Chattisgarh Express by twelve hooligans because he and another student tried to prevent them from abusing some girls. If these twelve are murderers, then the sixty passengers travelling in the

[3] *India Today*, 9 September 2002.
[4] *The Pioneer*, 25 January 2004.
[5] *Hindustan Times*, 29 January 2004.

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same coach, sitting silently and watching are accomplices. Many Mishras' will fade away because of the same mute spectators who prefer cowardice to self-respect.

A person who passively accepts evil is as much a criminal as the one who is the source of it.

"A society that cannot protect the RESPECT and DIGNITY of its WOMEN and CHILDREN has no right to exist."

WORK CULTURE

An interviewer asked a candidate how long he had worked in his previous job. The applicant replied, "Fifty years." The interviewer asked, "How old are you?" The answer was, "Forty years." The interviewer questioned, "How could you work for fifty years, when you are only forty years old?" The answer was, "I worked overtime!"

There are three kinds of people in this world. Some who turn up their sleeves, some who turn up their noses and still some others who never turn up!

NO WORK, FULL PAY

"So who is ultimately robbing the taxpayer? The DTC's administrative officials and its Legal Cell.

A large number of Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) ex-employees get paid for doing nothing, not even reporting for work. Why? Because firstly, the DTC's Legal Cell doesn't seem interested in pushing DTC's interests hard enough (choosing instead to rob the taxpayer). And secondly because the corporation's administration has found a novel way of milking

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it. This multi-crore racket of pay-without-work has been going on in the DTC for several years."[6]

The *"Chalta hai"* attitude and lack of pride in one's own performance has also become our national culture. People don't even want to do what they are paid to do. They only do what they can get away with. With this kind of attitude and thinking, can a nation achieve excellence?

People want to make money without earning it. They want promotions regardless of whether they are efficient or not. Just because they have completed a year, they think they deserve a raise. To achieve these objectives, instead of self-evaluation and improvement, they use devious means and dirty politics to achieve unearned benefits. They want all the benefits and facilities despite their low productivity, not realising that they are only depleting the organisation's and country's valuable resources, whereas it is their responsibility to replenish them.

Once, a man went for an interview and asked the interviewer, "Does your company offer bonus?" The interviewer said, "No". "What about life insurance?" "No". "Any medical benefits?" "No". "Any pension?" "No". "Education for the kids?" The man said, "No". "Two months fully paid free vacation with boarding, lodging and travel for the family?" The interviewer said, "No". He, then, asked, "Did your previous company offer all of these?" The interviewee replied, "Yes." Amazed, the interviewer asked, "Why are you leaving your present company, in that case?" The applicant replied, "Because the company went bankrupt."

What is the moral of the story? Short-sighted people do not realise that their greed becomes self-destructive.

"India has the maximum number of holidays. A government servant can easily have more than 150 days off, comprising of Saturdays, Sundays, public holidays, casual leave and earned leave. India

[6] Nitish K. Singh, *Today,* 12 January 2004.

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would get the gold, silver and bronze medals at any of the Olympics for the highest number of holidays in a year.

There's casual leave and the long list of gazetted holidays, which means the number of officially sanctioned holidays could easily cross 183 days in a year.

Our *neta*s and *babu*s may be convinced that work must be avoided like the plague, but must they impose the cost on productive, hard-working people who want to enhance their well-being and contribute to national prosperity?

The employed sector average of 23.8 holidays per year, over and above the weekly Sunday across the Atlantic, where five-day weeks figure, are less flattering.

The Americans get an average of 9.2 holidays annually beyond their weekly off-days. In the UK and Japan, the corresponding figures are 7.8 and 14.8.

This country (India) has the maximum number of religious public holidays, over and above the luxury of restricted optional holidays. Neither Mahatma Gandhi nor Dr Ambedkar would have approved of their birthdays being exploited to reduce the GDP and promote an anti-work ethic. All this happens because our political masters conclude that the granting of such holidays gain them votes.

Every time an old politician dies, a holiday is declared and the Parliament is adjourned, adding to the damage he inflicts on the country."[7]

I slept and dreamed that life was joy,
I awoke and saw that life was duty,
I acted, and behold: duty was joy.

– Rabindranath Tagore

[7] From *The Times of India* Archives.

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A Tourist's Travails

"Following a recent eagerly anticipated three-week holiday in India, I am compelled to bring to your attention the fact – that I wouldn't recommend a visit (to India) to anyone. I arrived at this conclusion on the basis of the following reasons. For a foreigner, the entry charges to many of the monuments and national parks are exploitative. To visit the Taj Mahal, a foreigner is charged Rs 750 compared to Rs 20 from an Indian. The cost to visit the Agra Fort is over Rs 500, a fee that we refused to pay for the simple reason that the fort was a polluted disgrace. The moat around the Agra Fort is full of refuse; families (travelling) on trains don't think twice about chucking their litter out of the window. Similarly, the litter in the Keoladeo National Park (Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary) is not just a disgrace but harmful to the bird population. These points left me very saddened and disappointed."[8]

In our culture, we treat a guest coming to our house as though he was God Himself. However, reports like the above makes one wonder if we are doing enough to keep this culture alive?

[8] Letter to the editor, Peter Strange, *The Times of India,* Galway, Ireland, 29 January 2004.

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14

Freedom is Not Free

Every generation needs to earn its own freedom.

Human dignity and freedom, hard-earned by men over centuries, can be lost quickly through indifference and short-sightedness. Freedom is not like an ancestral property. It must be earned, sustained and strengthened, generation after generation. Personal tragedies and sacrifices become acceptable and can be endured by people only when they deem the nation worthy of it.

What does a society look for in its philosophy of healthy survival?

A healthy society needs the following not only to survive but also to thrive:

- ***Vision:*** Respect and dignity for every citizen, that's his birthright.
- ***Mission:*** To bring freedom through EDUCATION AND JUSTICE.
- ***Objective:*** To ensure good governance through good people and good laws.

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WHAT IS VISION?

Vision is the ability to see the invisible. It is the ability to see beyond the obvious. It is not about problem-solving, but instead it is about preempting and preventing problems.

Things may be bad, but because we are moral beings, we have every reason to be hopeful. Far-sighted people do not predict, but fore-warn what may or may not happen.

Helen Keller was once asked, "What is worse than having no eyesight?" Keller replied, "Having eyesight with no vision."

Poor eyes limit your sight but poor vision limits your actions.

The vision of every society is to have its citizens live with respect and dignity. Do we have it?

The "Right to Life" as enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution of India, clearly means something more than mere survival. It includes the right to live with human dignity and is aimed at ensuring that a person's life is meaningful and complete, so that he can take joy in his existence.

MISSION

To realise freedom through education and justice.

Freedom

Freedom is attained when an honest citizen can pursue a legal avenue to bring peace, prosperity and happiness to himself, his family and society.

Do we have it? Or do we need to do illegal things in order to accomplish legal objectives?

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The meaning of freedom has not changed till today. It means protection against intimidation. It means rule of law through justice and fairness. It implies security of life and property to the honest and the innocent. It is synonymous to equal opportunity.

FREEDOM

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
Where knowledge is free
Where the world is not broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls
Where the words come out from the depth of truth
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
Into the dreary desert sand of deaf habit
Where the mind is lead forward by thee
Into ever-widening thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

– Rabindranath Tagore

The question today is are we really without fear? Is knowledge free? Is the world not fragmented? Do words come from the depth of truth? Has reason not lost its way?

15 August is the day when every Indian remembers the sacrifices made by our freedom fighters in the past. Freedom goes beyond saluting flags and pledging one's allegiance to the nation. It symbolises standing by the principles that the flag symbolises.

Just as horticulture cannot be reduced to the pulling out of weeds, freedom similarly means more than just an absence of oppression.

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The greatest resource that any nation can possess is peace, and a nation belongs to only those who love freedom. It is the brave and the self-reliant who are willing to accept responsibility to preserve it. They dare to shape their own lives and that of their nation. For the truly patriotic, freedom and sacrifice are two sides of the same coin.

Freedom comes not as a gift, but as a reward to the brave.

Freedom in society means more than just a choice between working for a living and starving. A good society is established upon the principles of freedom, equality, justice and humanity, for which our forefathers sacrificed their lives and fortunes. A nation as a political and moral entity, represents freedom and responsible government.

Jim Burke said, "People are qualified for civil liberty in the exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains." There is a difference between liberty and licence. Not only does absolute power corrupt absolutely, absolute liberty too, corrupts absolutely.

The tree of freedom grows only when it is watered with the sweat of people who love freedom.

"Those who give up FREEDOM to purchase temporary SAFETY deserve neither freedom nor safety."

"Only free men can negotiate, prisoners cannot enter into negotiations. Your freedom and mine cannot be separated."

– Nelson Mandela, while refusing to bargain for freedom after 21 years in prison.

The path to freedom is not free from risks.

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What Freedom is not:

- Freedom is not a licence.
- Unregulated freedom generates anarchy.
- Freedom for my fist stops where your nose begins.

Education

> *Education does not mean teaching people to know what they do not know; it means teaching them to behave as they do not behave.*
>
> – Mark Twain

What is Education?

An educated individual is one who has the ability to differentiate between right and wrong, good and evil. There are two types of education – one that helps make a life and the other, a living.

Individuals are not born good or evil – but their choices make them so. It is the most critical responsibility of a society to teach its citizens to make the right choices in life through formal and informal education.

> *By education I mean, that training in excellence from youth upward, which makes a man passionately desire to be a perfect citizen, and teaches him to rule, and to obey, with justice. This is the only education, which deserves the name. That other sort of training that aims at acquiring wealth or bodily strength, is not worthy to be called education at all.*
>
> – Plato

These thoughts of Mark Twain and Plato stand true even today.

Why is Education Important?

- Educated people are easy to lead but hard to enslave.

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- In a democracy where the quantity of votes rather than quality determine the future of nations, the more enlightened citizens are, the better choices will they make.
- Education will produce a good citizen who cannot only make a good living but a good life.

A politician made a major shift from a stand that he took in the past. A fellow politician congratulated him and said, "I am glad that you saw the light." The politician replied, "No, I just felt the heat."

Since our politicians refuse to see the light, citizens ought to make them feel the heat. That can only happen if our citizens are enlightened.

Churning out responsible citizens is the true purpose of education. A person must be prepared to accept personal, professional and social responsibilities. Only a person who accepts social responsibility earns the right to a right.

'Educating the mind without morals creates a maniac in a society.'

Education is reflected in people's participation in community affairs. Through their involvement in community activities, educated citizens pledge their allegiance to the nation. The true test of a civilisation lies in the kind of citizens it produces. Character-building does not start when a child is born. It actually starts a hundred years before.

According to a study in 1997, Kerala was the least corrupt state in India. Can this be related to the high literacy rate in Kerala? Could there be a corelation between high literacy rates and low levels of corruption?[1]

A country, which educates its people, helps them build a defence system against the violation of their basic rights.

[1] *Citizens' Guide to Promote Integrity*, CVC.

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It is better to be uneducated than ill-educated.

What Education is Not:

- Education is not a matter of handing medical books and a stethoscope to a child and expecting him to be a doctor.
- Education is not just a degree. A degree tells us that a person has a lot of information in one area, but that does not necessarily mean that person has abilities and capabilities to live righteously. A person does need information to get educated, but having information does not necessarily mean that a person is educated.

How can a blind man visualise colours? How can he distinguish between light and dark? When the blind lead the blind, they both fall in the ditch.

But how can you show light to the blind? That is the big question! Citizens have to be enlightened.

Justice

Justice is *truth in action*. Do we have it? People want JUSTICE, not charity.

A crime is committed for the powerful; the case is closed without the offender being punished. "Seventy-three per cent of inmates await trial."[2] Many of them may be innocent. You and I could be in their place and if we were, would we not expect somebody to stand up for us? Then why don't we stand up for them?

"In a corrupt system the INFLUENTIAL get BAIL, the REST get JAIL."

[2] *Sunday Times of India*, 31 March 2002.

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"*Just like a tree is judged by the fruit it bears, a judge is judged by the kind of rulings he delivers. One cannot expect a fox to be the judge at the trial of geese.*"

– Unknown

The honour of a judge depends on his integrity and fairness and not on his position or his robe. He or she must never sully the honour of his robe. An ethical lawyer is a custodian of the legal system. His practice is not a commodity to be traded.

When rules apply only to the masses and not to the classes, tyranny results.

To the corrupt, injustice is easy to bear. What hurts is justice.

We constantly hear about the long arms of the law. Is it just empty words or is it a reality?

"*Lack of JUSTICE makes citizens lose respect for the LAW.*"

We boast about our motto, *SATYAMEVA JAYATE*. Translated this means **TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL.** *The big question is, "When?" Besides, how can it prevail when truth is no defence against the judiciary, according to the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971.* The present provisions on the law of contempt of court should be amended so that truth, coupled with public interest should be allowed as defence. Why can't truth be the defence to a contempt action?

"A law that prevents citizens from making a truthful charge against a judge is absolutely unreasonable. Will it be a contempt of court to allege that the Law Lords of England take bribes?

Hostile or unjust criticism of a judge, scandalises the judiciary. A

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personal attack upon a judge, connected or unconnected with his office is dealt with under the rules of libel and slander. The concept of contempt of court has great sanctity, no doubt. Its object is not to protect just the dignity of the courts, but to protect the administration of justice.

Lord Solomon opined in 1969 that if there is, 'Just cause for challenging the integrity of a judge. It would not be contempt of court to do so. Indeed, it would be a public duty to bring the relevant facts to light.' The European Convention on Human Rights is akin to our Bill of Rights. In 1992, the European Court of Human Rights struck down the decision of a Spanish court because it had barred the defence of truth in a case of contempt. It is time the law in India is amended. Elsewhere, the offence of scandalising the court is on the verge of obsolescence. In India, it is gaining new life dangerously and unconstitutionally."[3]

"The average time taken to resolve a court case is about 20 years. The number of cases pending in Indian courts will take 300 years to be resolved if no new case is registered. The legal system is meant to protect the honest and punish the criminal. But for the criminal, litigation is a very convenient way to avoid retribution. According to the Central Vigilance Commissioner, at least four files come to him every month, where the officer who is charged, has died.

Prolonged litigation and inbuilt delays in the legal system are ideally suited for the promotion of corruption at all levels. A court case that drags on for years, punishes the innocent and gives lawyers an opportunity to exploit the client."[4]

"India can boast the longest legal dispute in history – a land dispute in Maharashtra lasted 650 years. According to a paper by Mohan G. Gopal, Visiting Professor at Georgetown University, the

[3] *Hindustan Times*, 7 January 2003.

[4] N. Vittal, *Corruption in India*, Academic Foundation.

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government is involved in no less than 60 per cent of all civil suits appeals. A special feature of India is that the government appeals against almost every adverse decision, even those of its own administrative tribunals. In no other country does the government appeal everything. The Indian government's success rate in appeals is just 5 to 6 per cent. This is probably the lowest success rate in the world. Most government appeals are frivolous."[5]

In a society where a case takes 20 years to come to trial, one has to be either stupid or blind to expect any proof or evidence. The delay itself destroys the authenticity of the evidence.

Jails are certainly not meant to be five-star facilities, but neither should they be places to perpetuate crime.

Jails are meant only for criminals, not the innocent. Many innocent people jailed without trials have taken to crime because they were forced to live together with hardened criminals.

The Judiciary

A signboard outside a lawyer's chamber, "Where there is a will, there is a way. Where there is a way, there is a law. Where there is a law, there is a rule. Where there is a rule, there is a loophole. Where there is a loophole, there is a lawyer. And I am here."

"Speaking in Kerala, the former Chief Justice of India said that 20 per cent of judicial officials were corrupt. That is probably his estimate. One out of five is alarming. Justice Michael Saldanha said that 33 per cent of judges were corrupt. That makes one out of three judicial officials corrupt."[6]

Whichever number is right, anything more than 0 per cent is too high.

[5] Swamynathan A. Aiyer, "Crowding of Justice", *The Times of India*, Common Cause, January–March 2000.
[6] From the Lawyers' Collective, February 2003, Kauveri Haritas.

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So much for *SATYAMEVA JAYATE!*

"Sting shows justice is on sale.

SC shocked as magistrate issues warrant against Kalam for Rs 40,000.

A journalist bribes a magistrate of a Gujarat court to issue bailable warrants against President Kalam, Chief Justice V.N. Khare, Justice B.P. Singh and well-known lawyer R.K. Jain.

Vijay Shekhar, a TV journalist, handed over videotapes of a sting operation he claimed to have conducted to expose corruption in the lower judiciary."[7]

If this could happen to the people holding some of the highest offices in the country, can you imagine the misery that a common man is suffering today?

So much for *SATYAMEVA JAYATE!*

Anything that obstructs the deliverance of justice violates the sanctity of the judicial process. A person giving a false witness under oath, thus destroying the life of a fellow innocent citizen and his family, is an example of obstruction of justice. It is not only a legal issue but also a moral and ethical one.

SC: Time Factor no Ground for Dropping Criminal Cases

"A bench comprising Justice M.B. Shah and Justice D.M. Dharmadhikari said, 'It is the duty of a court to see that neither the victim nor the accused suffers by mischief of the investigating agency or the staff of the court.'

The court's observation came on an appeal against an order of the Patna High Court, which dropped a case on the ground that 21 years had passed since it first came for hearing in a trial court.

[7] *The Times of India*, 29 January 2004.

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The police registered an FIR in 1979, on the basis of a statement by Ram Ekbak Missir, accusing Ram Niwash Pandey of involvement in a murder in Bihar. Later, the police submitted a report in the case to the trial court.

Meanwhile, the complainant himself was in custody for 11 years in connection with a murder case. After his release in 1997, he found out that his complaint had not been placed before the magistrate for 10 years between 1990 and 2000.

Finally, the case was traced in 2000. Subsequently, a magistrate took cognisance of the offence against the accused named in the FIR."[8]

How many Pandeys are suffering a similar fate? Even one is one too many. Who should be held accountable? An irresponsible official or an irresponsible administration? Or both? Can this man ever be compensated? Can his family ever be compensated? If justice is based on fairness then the innocent ought to be protected and the guilty punished.

Who should protest against injustice?

Anyone who is responsible for upholding justice must protest against injustice. If they don't, aren't they accomplices to the crime?

Tricks of the Trade

On one of my travels abroad, while I was waiting in the lounge, I noticed a person who seemed rather familiar. We both got up and introduced ourselves. I said, "I'm Shiv Khera." He told me his name and said that he was a practising criminal attorney. My comment was, "I hope you are the kind who protects the innocent and makes sure the criminals go behind bars." He said, "No, I am the other kind – who represents the criminals and makes sure they are out." Immediately, we had an emotional disconnect and I

[8] Syed Liaquat Ali, *Hindustan Times,* 17 October 2002.

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was very uncomfortable standing next to him. I could not think of further conversation. All I said was, "You are truly a practicing criminal attorney."

I further added,

1. "I hope you can look at yourself in the mirror everyday and be at peace with your conscience.
2. I hope your mother is proud of you.
3. I hope your children respect you."

Ending the conversation, I walked away as I did not want to even stand next to him anymore because when the chemistry is not right, just being there becomes uncomfortable.

I am sure there may be others, who unlike this attorney, sell their professional time, but not their conscience.

> *There is one and only one thing more hideous than crime, namely, repressive justice.*
>
> – Simone Weil

"The JUDGEMENT of Thareja in the Priyadarshini Matto case has stirred the proverbial hornet's nest, by raking up the age-old dilemma as to which organ of the judicial system is responsible for miscarriage of justice in the country. Our lawyers are the fountainhead of all the ills that have manifested in our judicial system. They misguide ignorant litigants and mercilessly fleece them without any qualms of conscience. The lawyers who work extra time to teach them the tricks of the trade for 'mutual benefit', mastermind the rampant corruption amongst subordinate staff in the courts."[9]

"*Lawyers have converted the seeking of adjournments into an art. Interim injunctions are sought for and cases are delayed inordinately. When the case itself comes up, long, repetitious arguments are used to delay the finalisation of the*

[9] Ram Gopal Bansal, *Hindustan Times,* 30 December 1999.

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case. Judges who are not firm, grant adjournments on the flimsiest of grounds or delay the judgements. A time limit must be prescribed for clearing cases, as is being done in the Philippines.

On the matter of corruption, no judge could be corrupt without the active collaboration of a lawyer and supine indifference of other lawyers who do not take the issue of corruption seriously.

People have a right to expect that the Constitution of their country will provide for the security of life, property and liberty. It is very necessary that the system of reward and punishment in society, be transparent."[10]

Bihar Advocates Submit Forged Papers: Protectors or Predators?

"For several years, unscrupulous advocates and registry staff have taken the Judges of Patna High Court for a ride and obtained bails and reliefs for their client on the basis of fake judgements and doctored medical reports. It is most unfortunate that advocates are involved in such dirty deeds. In some other cases, the advocates and petitioners had connived with the police and made sure that the case diary did not reach the court to verify the nature of injuries. The Registrar General's report says that at least 100 advocates, advocates' clerks, and the High Court employees as well as the petitioners were involved in these cases."[11]

It is worth asking ourselves the question, that as protectors of law, are we selling our professional time or our conscience?

It is cruelty to the innocent when the guilty go unpunished.

So much for *SATYAMEVA JAYATE!*

[10] "Delays in Indian Judicial System", *Transparency International India and Lok Sevak Sangh,* pp. 26-27.
[11] *The Pioneer,* 25 October 2002.

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Police State

If the police are lawless and politicians are their patrons, then ordinary citizens are doomed.

If there are problems with the police that require to be solved, there are solutions that stare us in the face too.

The National Police Commission, many years ago, had analysed and made some recommendations for improving police effectiveness. One was to insulate police from undue political pressures with accountability to the law only and not to individuals.

But leaving reforms to superhuman individual efforts in a debased system, that rewards the bad and punishes the good everyday, is not the answer.

> *The love of justice in most men is nothing more than a fear of injustice.*
>
> – Albert Einstein

SO MUCH FOR *SATYAMEVA JAYATE!!*

Injustice

Unjust nations invite their own pain, and freedom cannot prevail in a corrupt society.

Courts are considered to be the temples of justice. Nothing could be worse for a citizen than an absence of justice. If justice is worth having, it is worth fighting for. Patriotism and justice go hand-in-hand and it becomes the moral duty of every citizen, not only for the present, but also for the future, to fight for justice. We need to have more activist judges. They must be allowed actively pursue the truth.

Charity

All forms of philanthropy are worthy of respect. But unless we

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plug the causes that make philanthropy necessary, it is like a bucket with a hole. Whatever we put in just keeps flowing out.

Many philanthropic organisations provide free ambulance services to victims of heart attacks. *But what about those who cause heart attacks?*

Blood donation camps are set up regularly. *But what about bloodsuckers?*

Poverty does not create as much crime as crime creates poverty.

"Despite 65 million tonnes of foodgrains and a whopping Rs 27,000 crore as food subsidy, people still go hungry. According to a survey of BPL (Below Poverty Line) families and PDS shops in east Delhi by Parivartan, an NGO, over 70 per cent of subsidised foodgrains do not reach the desperately poor. Parivartan in the past two weeks surveyed 160 families in Welcome Colony near Seelampur in east Delhi on their ration offtake for the month of June 2003. The records of 60 families were burnt last Saturday when the local PDS dealers attacked the team. The remaining documents tell a dismal tale, 'Not a single family has got the full amount of ration. Only 23 per cent got something, that too lesser than the prescribed amount and at a higher price,' said Arvind Kesriwal."[12]

Instead of bringing prosperity to the poor, we are transferring wealth from both the honest poor and the honest rich to the dishonest rich. The entire poverty alleviation programme fails to work because of corruption.

I was once informed that my book has been pirated. One of the press reporters asked me, "How do you feel?" I said, "Wonderful!" He said, "But you're losing royalty." I said, "Of course, I am losing royalty." I pulled out an article from *The Economic Times*, dated 13 July 2002 that said, "In India, there are Rs 4,000 crore

[12] *Hindustan Times*, 31 December 2003, p. 12.

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worth of pirated drugs being sold every year."[13] I am only losing royalty, but people who are consuming pirated drugs are losing their lives, and nowhere on the package does it say that it should not be sold to a police officer, a lawyer, a judge, a politician, or their kids. They'd have it and they'd be as dead as anybody else. You might call it an accident – I would call it murder.

Faulty Prescription

"Even more damning is the WHO finding that India, which is the fourth largest producer of medicines by volume, also churns out 35 per cent of the world's spurious drugs. And there are genuine fears that our spurious drug industry is moving beyond our shores. Latin America and Africa have already complained about the increased export of sub-standard drugs from India, and the United States has put us on its watch list threat. It could result in a complete export ban from India."[14]

> *Morality cannot be legislated, but behaviour can be regulated. Judicial decrees may not change the heart, but they can restrain the heartless.*
>
> – Martin Luther King, Jr.

Laws don't necessarily reflect goodness because goodness comes from ethics. A law is only an order and good laws are good orders.

A lawyer requesting a judge's attention pleaded, "Your honour! In the course of our deliberations, a question of law has come up. What is justice?" The judge responded, "It is not a question of law but a question of judgement."

OBJECTIVE

To ensure good governance through good people and good laws.

[13] *The Times of India,* 18 August 2003.
[14] *The Times of India,* 27 December 2003, p. 14.

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Do we have it?

Good Governance

The legitimate objective of a government is to do for a community of people whatever they need to have done, but cannot do at all in their separate and individual capacities.

– Abraham Lincoln

The prime objective of good governance is to value human life and to bring peace, progress and prosperity to the people it governs.

Forms of Government

Good governance has nothing to do with forms of government. Good governance is only possible through:

- Good People
- Good Laws

Good governance can only be achieved when people in administration consider public office as public trust, bestowed on them for the benefit of the country and not for any individual or party.

More important than the form of government is the principle of government.

For forms of government let fools contest;
What is best administered is best.

– Alexander Pope

Before we question the form of government we need to ask who ourselves has failed – the system or the people who operate the system. Without a constant review, even religion over time, becomes just a ritual.

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A good form of government does not always guarantee good governance. Corruption in every administration always starts either from wrong principles or from the lack of principles.

The right to govern is not a proprietary right. The only legitimate right to govern is the one given by those governed. Demanding accountability is the first step towards restoring freedom.

Democracy demands and gives people the right to overthrow oppression, tyranny and corruption.

Every decision of the government affects each and every area of our lives. In the long run, a government symbolises its people's wisdom or the lack of it.

Good governance is about equal sharing of blessings and opportunities.

Bad Governance

Bad Politics: The Indian Scene

The bulk of political expenditure is illegitimate and is used to buy votes, money and liquor or to bribe officials so that they connive in malpractices. While high political expenditure does not guarantee victory, low expenditure certainly guarantees defeat.

Political fiefdoms exist in many constituencies. With the help of ill-gotten money, they encourage criminal connections. To such criminal-political families, politics comes naturally and becomes a highly profitable business. Political parties then act only as umbrellas for convenience, that can be changed to suit the most profitable option.

Honest politicians also find it very difficult, if not impossible, to match resources and caste-mobilisation of politicians who have only self-interest at heart. Honest people are either forced to retire, or resort to corruption in order to take on the challenge. The question that arises in such a scenario is, "Does an honest public-

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spirited candidate have any chance to be elected or nominated?" Regardless of the answer, it is an uphill task.

If we do not maintain justice, justice will not maintain us. Lack of protest against injustice does not disprove the fact of oppression. It may only prove apathy and deeper degradation.

(Un)Free and (Un)Fair Elections

Democracy off the people, buy the people and fraud the people.

Politicians and the Electoral Process

A judge said to a defendant, "I understand you sold your vote for money. Do you have anything to say about it?" The man said, "No, your honour. I voted for this leader, because I like him." The judge said, "I have evidence you took money." "That's natural," said the man, "I like anyone who pays me money."

Corruption in public life is best exemplified by the way voters are bribed by electoral candidates, in complete violation of the law.

"Bad leaders take MONEY from the rich, VOTES from the poor, promising to protect one from the other."

"People who vote for bad LEADERS, are not TRUSTING them, but TRADING with them."

The Criminalisation of Politics

India is considered to be the largest democracy in the world, but we still lag far behind in achieving the most essential quality of a democratic country – free and fair elections. Do the following testify to free and fair elections in the country?

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"Want to be a *Neta*? Take to Crime."[15]

"Did you know that 700 of our 4,072 legislators have criminal records?"[16]

It is common knowledge that prior to elections, politicians hire *pehalwans* (strongmen). The question is why do they do this. Is it to protect themselves, coerce voters or capture booths?

Elections should not be prolonged in four or five phases spread over several months. The aim should be to hold polls throughout the country on one day but certainly not beyond two days.

On election day, 13 May 2004 in New Delhi, I saw voters with photo ID cards running from one booth to another without finding their names in the voters' list. How could these names vanish from the list when only a few months ago, their photo ID cards were made?

The system of candidates' representatives sitting outside the booth to inform the voters of their serial numbers should be discontinued and that role should be assumed by the Election Commission officers. The identity of the voters should be checked there itself. This will also eliminate the need for agents of candidates sitting inside the booths and in some ways influencing the voters.

Often, you have a choice among five candidates and none of them are good enough to be voted into power. Also, if you do not vote, you are not considered to have done your duty as a good citizen. If you do vote, what are your choices? You either choose the least of five evils, or you end up voting on caste and community lines. The following questions now arise about the person you voted for:

1. Was he your choice?
2. Does he represent you?

[15] Sutirtho Patranobis, *Hindustan Times,* 1 February 2002.

[16] Election Commission Statements, 1999.

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3. Did you want him to win?
4. Has the person who was the weakest evil, by gaining power, now become the strongest evil by default?

Is this free and fair elections? Is this democracy?

'Influence-peddling' and 'wheeling-dealing' create new business opportunities. What happens is:

- "Booth capturing is a common practice in India during the elections.
- Buying out votes.
- Convicted politicians contesting elections and winning from jail – such politicians win, not because they are popular or that people trust them, but because they terrorise the citizens.
- Lack of awareness about electoral errors.
  1. Pre-polling surveys showed **over 40 per cent** errors in cities.
  2. Post-polling surveys in cities indicated that about **22 per cent** of those who were listed as having voted, **did not actually participate in the polling**.
  3. Statewide survey results showed about **16 per cent errors** in the electoral rolls (commissions and omissions)."[17]

93 Lakh Voters 'Vanish' in AP

- "*7 per cent less voters:* New electoral list has 93.4 lakh names less.
- ***EC says:*** Unprecedented. Will definitely affect polls.
- ***How did this happen?*** No deletions in the list for many years. EC got complaints of non-existing voters. In a door-

[17] Lok Satta Org., Hyderabad.

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to-door search for voters, 93.4 lakh 'voters' were found missing.

- ***Political Input:*** Political parties gave a list of 70 lakh new voters; only 25 per cent were found to be real people."[18]

One vote can change the fate of a nation. Where 75 per cent votes are not real (example given above), where people don't exist, how can the legislators call themselves the representatives of the people? This probably is true in every constituency of every state of India.

IS THIS DEMOCRACY, HYPOCRISY OR A CONSPIRACY AGAINST THE CITIZENS?

[18] *The Times of India,* 22 January 2004, p. 1.

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15

Humanity and Nation above Religion

I sought my soul, but my soul I could not see,
I sought my God, but my God eluded me,
I sought my brother, and I found all three.

– Anonymous

To the truly spiritual, humanity and the nation are more important than fundamentalism. **Institutions are greater than individuals, but smaller than the nation.**

"Gandhiji had little inclination for religion, fads and rituals. His visits to temples or centres of pilgrimage were rare. He never felt the urge to do so, because to him service was the highest form of religion and for this a visit to the bhangi (untouchable) colony was more appropriate than a tryst with

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a godman. On one of the few occasions that he did, he came back disappointed.

Gandhiji was appalled when he learnt, in Kolkata, of the sacrifice of animals to appease Goddess Kali. He wrote, 'To my mind the life of a lamb is no less precious than that of a human being. I hold that, the more helpless a creature, the more entitled it is to protection by man, from the cruelty of man.'

In Rishikesh, Bapu was asked by a seer why he did not wear the sacred thread. He replied, 'I will not wear the sacred thread, for I see no necessity for it. Moreover, (it) should be a symbol of spiritual regeneration, presupposing a deliberate attempt on (the) part of the wearer at (achieving) a higher and purer life. I doubt whether in the present state of Hinduism and of India, Hindus can vindicate the right to wear a symbol charged with such a meaning. That right can come only after Hinduism has purged itself of untouchability and has shed a host of other evils and shams that have become rampant in it.'"[1]

It is a historical fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture. We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by those who love freedom. 'Wait' and 'patience' are two words often used by the privileged oppressors to the under-privileged oppressed. The question is, how long can or should a person wait on a hungry stomach? If justice delayed is justice denied, then aren't the words 'wait' and 'patience', contrary to justice?

Environmental Health Department of Singapore plans for and executes the exhumation of graves in closed government cemeteries

[1] *Hindustan Times,* New Delhi, 30 January 2004.

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and redevelop cemeteries to meet burial needs for the next 100 years. (Source: http://app.nea.gov.sg/cms/htdocs/category_sub.asp?cid=129)

Why can't we in India do the same? Could there be a better example of nation above religion? How come no religious rights seem to have been violated?

Singapore is a country which has a shortage of land. A portion of their land is reclaimed from the ocean. Hence, they have a law to exhume graves because they put their nation above everything.

When plague broke out, Swami Vivekananda started helping and tending to the sick in hospital. Someone asked him, "Swamiji, you're not a doctor. You can't do a whole lot for the sick. You should really be out there praying for these people." Swami Vivekananda replied, "What I am doing is my prayer. What you do in temples are only rituals."

Hands that serve humanity are a lot better than lips that just talk of divinity.

NATION AND ITS CHARACTER

A nation shows its character in the way it honours or dishonours its patriots.

A nation that forgets its freedom fighters ends up losing its own freedom. Have we forgotten our freedom fighters and soldiers who liberated this nation from foreign rule?

Lal Bahadur Shastri gave the philosophy of "Jai Jawaan, Jai Kisaan".

Rabindranath Tagore returned his Knighthood and the title of 'Sir' to the British government.

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Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, after passing the Indian Civil Service, refused to serve under the British.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was offered the Bharat Ratna following much agitation by his followers, 50 years after his death. His family refused to accept it. I agree with the decision that they took.

Bhagat Singh, one of the great revolutionary martyrs made the ultimate sacrifice for the country at the prime age of 23.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati founded the Arya Samaj in 1875, and attacked social weaknesses and false beliefs in the Hindu society by influencing the lives of millions of people. Lala Lajpat Rai, Ram Prasad Bismal, Sardar Bhagat Singh were all influenced by the Arya Samaj. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee gave *Vande Matram* to India which has touched the hearts of all Indians and became a source of inspiration. Aurobindo Ghosh, a freedom fighter, advocated an open revolt.

"Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel is a role model for integrity in public life and effective administration. In 1947, after India achieved independence, 13 out of the 14 Congress Committee members chose him for the post of the Congress President, who in turn, would the Prime Minister of free India. However, Gandhiji wanted Nehru as the Prime Minister. Patel, even though the choice of the people and 13 years seniour to Nehru withdrew. The sad part is that Sardar Patel was offered a Bharat Ratna only after 50 years of independence, after much controversy. In the meanwhile, many people, whether deserving or not, received the Bharat Ratna.

Dr Syama Prasad Mookerji was Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University. The call of duty to the nation propelled him into politics. His historic speech in the Lok Sabha on 14 April 1950, his resignation from the cabinet in protest against the Nehru-Liaquat Pact that betrayed the interest of the nation, his integrity and commitment made his stature rise in Parliament where he was acclaimed as the alternate prime minister of the country. He

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founded the Bhartiya Jan Sangh party. He was arrested and detained for taking up the cause of the integration of Jammu & Kashmir with India, and repealing of Article 370 of the Constitution. His mysterious death was a national tragedy. India suffered a setback, and sadly, no judicial enquiry was conducted to determine the cause of his death.

Bal, Pal and Lal (Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal and Lala Lajpat Rai) were labelled as revolutionaries, and they transformed the Indian freedom movement.

Dr B.R. Ambedkar launched a movement against untouchability and the caste system.

C.R. Das gave up his legal practice and plunged into the freedom struggle. He was arrested and said, "If our objective is noble, do not worry about the consequences."[2]

For all of these great patriots, their service to the nation was never contingent upon their receiving positions or titles. Their loyalties were to the nation.

The patriot who is the true Bharat Ratna, the "Jewel of India" is not remembered for the piece of paper that he received. Instead, people are in awe of him, and hold his memory dear, for what he did for the nation.

Most countries take their visiting foreign dignitaries to first pay homage to their most important citizens, and to the memorials of their unknown soldiers. Even though they made the ultimate sacrifice, they were never written about in history. However, without their sacrifices, those leaders who are written about would never have made it to the pages of history.

Every new entrant to the Indian Military Academy is greeted with the following commandments:

[2] From: Madhuri Madhok, *Portraits of Patriots*.

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- The safety, honour and welfare of the country come first, always and every time.
- The honour, welfare and comfort of the men you command come next.
- Your own ease, comfort and safety come last, always and everytime.

What a way to go!

CITY AND THE MAN

Long back, in 1948, speaking at a civic reception organised in his honour by the Bombay Municipal Corporation, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel said, "I had unalloyed happiness in the tasks which I performed. After all, to all of us, to serve our own country should give unmitigated pleasure and satisfaction, which I cannot get in any other sphere. Further, to cleanse the dirt of the city is quite different from cleansing the dirt of politics. From the former you get a good night's rest while the latter keeps you worried and you lose your sleep."[3]

I have heard of many instances where freedom fighters, who are still living, and have refused to accept the Tamra Patra (copper sheet certificate awarded by the Indian government in recognition of their past sacrifice for freedom) because they do not want to be honoured by the present government, which is not capable of controlling corruption, crime and communal violence that exist in the country today.

Unsung Hero

Dr Bindeshwar Pathak, founder of Sulabh International made it his life's mission to liberate scavengers and eradicate the practice of carrying night soil in India in order to achieve high standards of

[3] *Hindustan Times*, 31 October 2002.

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hygiene. Single-handedly, he took the challenge of cleaning. In the last 30 years, he has built more than one million toilets, that use a bare minimum of two litres of water against ten litres used in flush toilets, at a cost which is affordable by the lower-middle class. Sulabh has built nearly 6,000 'pay-and-use' toilets, open for 24 hours with facilities to bathe and wash clothes at a nominal cost to the poor. He is training other staff to carry the mission of serving the nation.

Bindeshwar Pathak has since been given the recognition he deserves – the Padma Bhushan.[4]

It is better to be honourable than to be honoured.

In a corrupt system, decorating and giving awards to the unworthy becomes a common practise. It may be a way of rewarding the sycophants. The deserving remain deprived because they don't have a godfather. The question arises, is this our culture? What examples are we setting for the coming generation?

Traitor Honoured

"Until the late 1950s, the growth rate of the Philippines' economy was one of the highest in East Asia. However, under President Ferdinand Marcos' leadership from 1965 to 1986, the Philippines 'slipped behind other countries in the region'. With its abundance of natural resources such as timber, coconuts, sugar, bananas, rubber and minerals, and its literate and hard-working labour force, the Philippines should have been one of Asia's most prosperous economies today. But, it became 'one of the worst-performing economies' among the ASEAN countries. Carmen Navarro Pedrosa had estimated that President Marcos amassed 'a staggering $ 15 billion', which was more than half of the country's national debt.

Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore attributed the lack

[4] From Nilima Pathak's article, "Look for God in yourself".

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of punishment of Marcos, his family and cronies for their corrupt activities, to the 'soft, forgiving culture' of the Philippines. He observed, 'Only in the Philippines could a leader like Ferdinand Marcos, who pillaged his country for over 20 years, still be considered for a national burial. Insignificant amounts of the loot have been recovered, yet his wife and children were allowed to return and engage in politics. . . . General Fabian Ver, Marcos's commander-in-chief had fled the Philippines together with Marcos in 1986. When he died in Bangkok, the Estrada government gave the general military honours at his burial.' "[5]

Isn't there something wrong with the values of a nation, that can honour with a State burial someone who has betrayed its trust and looted it? Aren't we witnessing a similar behaviour in India?

When a corrupt politician dies, his name should not appear in the "Obituary" column. Rather, it should appear in the "Public Improvement" column in newspapers.

[5] Jon S.T. Quah, *Curbing Corruption in Asia*, Eastern Universities Press, p. 99.

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16

Synopsis

My observations on Election 2004

- Some people ask questions out of concern, while others ask only to have ammunition for gossip. I was visiting a friend of mine and someone there asked me, "You are not a politician. Why did you jump into the election? You could possibly have joined a party, taken a ticket and may be even won; but you chose to go independent. Why?" I was silent for about thirty seconds. My friend's father-in-law Late Col. Ajay Mushran, who belonged to a family of freedom fighters, was in public life for over three decades, was a Member of Parliament, a seasoned statesman and a one-man army, asked me, "Should I respond to that question?" I said, please do. His response, so appropriate, was as if he had read my mind brilliantly. He said the following in Hindi, *"Desh ki durdasha inse dekhi nahin gayee. Jeetne ke liye utre the lekin haarne se darte nahin the, isliye independent candidate ke roop mein apne kagaz file kar diye."* ("Since he could not stand the deplorable state of the country, he entered the fray. He fought to win, but

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filed his papers as an Independent, because he was not scared of losing.") At the Lal Bahudar Shastri Academy, Mussorie, he was addressing the probationers along with a few other people. They were asked, "If you had to name only one quality that makes a person successful in public life, what would it be?" People came up with different answers like honesty, justice, loyalty, hard-work, etc. Late Col. Mushran's answer was, "Ability to say no to doing what's wrong." This means that one must have a value-based judgement to distinguish between right and wrong and then the courage to say "NO" to doing wrong. Most people are scared to do what's right. The ability to say 'no' and not do what is wrong is even more far-fetched. What Col. Mushran meant was that integrity without courage is useless and courage without integrity is oppression.

❖ Six days of learning revealed what was beyond my imagination. Some things became very clear:

1. Some people came forward who were genuinely committed to the nation. They were looking for a positive alternative. They volunteered whole heartedly with no ulterior motives nor monetary gain. In fact, many spent money out of their pocket with no reimbursement.
2. I met a breed of vultures, opportunists looking to make a quick buck and disappear. This includes people from different parties who were willing to be bought and sold on auction, selling their conscience to the highest bidder.
3. The third breed were the so-called "elite class", the skeptics and cynics who were totally indifferent and who took the day of voting as a holiday. Some of them in my opinion ought to have their voting right forfeited.
4. The fourth thing I learnt is that there seemed to be no difference between the two major political parties. There were enough criminal elements in both. They were both

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using the same cheap tactics, including, but not limited to liquor and money distribution.

5. India by no standard is shining. Hundred yards away from a most posh colony like Vasant Vihar, there are enough *jhuggi-jhopris* where people are only breathing, but not living. There are no drains, no water, no electricity. They share the open space as bathrooms with the dogs' and pick up food from the same place – it is pathetic and sad. This is 50 years after independence in a city like Delhi which is the showcase of India.
6. India is not feeling good. Only perverts can feel-good in a country where for 40,000 bucks, warrants of arrest can be issued on the President and Chief Justice of India. The common man without money or contacts is living in pain.
7. Most people who hide behind high sounding words like 'compassion' and 'tolerance' ought to replace them with 'indifference' and 'selfishness'.
8. Every cluster of *jhuggi-jhopri* has a *pradhan* or a mafia chief who works hand in glove with the local bureaucrats and the police. Basic amenities for survival are given only to the highest bidders and others are deprived.
9. What greater slavery can there be where citizens are afraid of their own police and government.
10. Jallianwala Bagh is repeated in every community everyday, not by the outside rulers, but our own people in authority and power, oppressing the innocent.
11. Elections are neither 'free' nor 'fair' as voters list are inaccurate, faulty, incomplete and not representative of the people. People who have been living for 20 years in an area were missing from the list of that area.
12. There is no such thing known as anti-incumbency. There is only something known as anti-bad governance. To the

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70–80 per cent of India that lives in villages, bureaucracy means dealing with the lineman, *patwari*, *thanedar* and *tehsildar* from birth to death. From birth to death, these are the only four people he ends up seeing, and the oppression and exploitation has not changed.

13. In the last thirty years, no General Election has ever been for a political party but always against existing bad governance. Hence, the other party came in by default and proved even worse. What a change!
14. Today, not only the honest people are fed up, but also cheats and crooks are fed up because they meet bigger cheats and crooks. This is one race where everyone loses and the greatest loss is loss of dignity and pride to our country.
15. A nation can never be strong externally till it is strong internally.
16. Caste and religion-based political card is played by clever politicians only because they have a very poor track record of performance and have no other issue.

❖ The motivation behind standing as an Independent candidate was that I could express my views independently rather than just be a mouthpiece of a party.

❖ The single most important problem facing the country, which if removed can change the destiny of the nation, is lack of education (not literacy). The reasons for this are:

1. Educated people can be lead, but not enslaved.
2. In a democracy, the more enlightened citizens are, the better choices they can make.
3. Every other issue in the nation including poverty, health, civic responsibilities are all linked to education.

❖ My comments in the context of Indian leadership is that the

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only visionary leader since India's Independence who comes to my mind is Sardar Patel. Had it not been for him, India would not have been divided into two, but into two hundred.

- ❖ How can anyone be satisfied with the way the world's largest so-called democracy functions; where to survive a person has to resort to using illegal means.
- ❖ Remedies for a better India are:
  1. Every citizen must become a soldier of the nation. A soldier not only sacrifices for the nation, but is also willing to stop those who destroy the nation.
  2. If an honest citizen goes to jail unjustifiably, the whole nation should be ready to go to jail.
  3. We must eradicate this nation of the corrupt breed of traitors who are ready to sell the country for personal gains.
- ❖ We need the following remedial measures to prevent the nation from disintegration:
  1. Empowering citizens by giving them the choice of good candidates and having the Right to Reject bad ones.
  2. Bring justice to honest citizens so that they can feel secure in their own country by bringing a "Witness Protection Plan".
  3. Bring respect and dignity to every citizen by addressing the issues that cause need- or greed-based corruption. Get laws changed and implemented through the legal system.
  4. The system of reservation based on caste should be abolished immediately, as it is divisive in nature, and it adversely affects the integrity of India. If at all, we must have reservation, it should be based on economic needs, and on first-come-first-serve basis.
  5. Set up a special cell for politicians with criminal charges

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to be given a daily trial, like the Arthur Andersen case which was heard and tried on a priority basis and closed in approximately 3 months. This will eliminate criminalisation of politics.

6. There should be equality amongst citizens which can be brought in by introducing Uniform Civil Code.

Is there any hope? You bet! Failure is a luxury we cannot afford.

I invite every concerned citizen, especially the youth to stop being a victim and take charge to create our own and our country's future on a foundation that coming generations would be proud of. Our Mission Freedom is the beginning of the end of the evil empire that has been inflicting pain on its own citizens.

This is the beginning of a movement that will give respect and dignity to every citizen, which is his birthright.

Let's together make the country proud!

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17

Country First

Cicero (106 BC–43 BC), Roman statesman and philosopher analysed why men or civilisations fail. He came up with six reasons. Two of them are:

1. We cannot build ourselves by crushing others. This is the problem that most Third World countries face today. There are two ways of building the tallest structure in town:
   - Destroy others and by default you become the tallest building, but this approach does not always work, because those whom you destroyed will come back some day and crush you brick-by-brick.
   - Build a solid foundation, grow gradually and make yourself the tallest building.
2. Envisioning something is impossible, till we get to doing it. Just because we can't see the solution, doesn't mean that it doesn't exist.

All positive changes require sacrifice and discipline. The path is full of risks and obstacles. Our patience and resolve will be put to

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test. There shall be threats, criticism and condemnation. The greatest danger of all, however, would be to do nothing.

> *Our goal is not the victory of might, but the vindication of right – not peace at the expense of freedom, but both peace and freedom.*
>
> – John F. Kennedy

The cost of freedom is always high, but concerned citizens have always paid the price. The one path that a society ought never to choose is the path of surrender or submission to oppression.

> *If a man hasn't discovered something that he will die for, he isn't fit to live.*
>
> – Martin Luther King, Jr.

Life is not a spectator sport. Onlookers criticise, but they don't want to get involved. They are free-loaders. They want anything and everything for free. They don't want to pay a price, they don't want to earn anything.

They should either get involved or shut up!

Country First is a non-profit organisation.

Country First's objective is to prevent social degeneration through a focussed action plan.

PROSPERITY WITH INTEGRITY

A famous economist once gave a long speech, stressing heavily on economic principles. In spite of his best efforts to communicate, the faces in the audience seemed confused and reflected more questions than answers.

At the closing, the Chairperson thanked the speaker and summed up the entire programme in two lines, "I guess, the respected economist meant if your outflow is greater than your inflow, well, you have a problem."

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I think the following pillars seem to be the foundation of any economic growth:

1. You cannot enrich the poor by impoverishing the rich.
2. There is no substitute for hard work and discipline.
3. Everything in economic life has a source, a destination and a price.
4. The only revenue that a government earns is either from taxes or from borrowings.
5. When the outflow is more than the inflow, your money gets devalued.
6. The biggest job security that a person can ever have is his own good performance.
7. Widespread wage increase without a corresponding increase in productivity simply increases the cost of living for everyone.
8. The greatest good for the greatest number means higher productivity per worker.
9. All productivity is based on three factors:
   (a) Natural resources
   (b) Human resources
   (c) Capital resources
10. For any society to grow, there must be savings and capital formation in order to replace the obsolete by purchasing new technology.
11. The competitive edge comes in when progressive individuals take far-sighted economic decisions.

Accountability

There must be a Citizens' Charter that provides for compensation to citizens in case of failure of a government department to perform.

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COUNTRY FIRST ACTION PLAN

The Country First action plan shall be achieved through Public Interest Litigations and public support to enforce justice.

The thrust of Country First would be to bring about good governance through good laws and good people.

It has three main agendas to clean the system:

1. ***The right to elect must be accompanied by the right to reject:*** Voters perceive all parties to be equally corrupt. The only difference may be that some have been exposed as being corrupt, while others are yet to be exposed. Hence, in the last 50 years, voting has never been positive for a party, but always been negative, i.e. against incumbency.

Country First stands for introducing an option stating *"None of the above"* on the ballot. If more than 50 per cent of the voters exercise this option, then all participating candidates should be debarred from that constituency for that election, and the upcoming ones.

Benefit: This gives a citizen the option to reject anti-social elements and encourages honest citizens to step in. Only good people can take good decisions, legislate and implement good laws.

2. ***There must be a witness protection plan: why do witnesses turn hostile?*** They do so, because money or muscle power plays a very important role, which is reflected in the low conviction rate of 6 per cent as against a much higher conviction rate in Western countries. Witness Protection Programmes are successfully operational in many countries the world over. Why should not such a plan be operational and successful in India?

Benefit: It would protect the innocent from injustice and bring the criminals to justice. More people would come forward to bear witness if they were assured of police protection.

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3. While addressing the causes leading to corruption, corrective action without preventive action would be futile. C***orruption cases must be tried on a daily basis,*** like the Arthur Andersen in the United States.

Benefit: An honest person today, does not want to take a stand because the system penalises him, and he is afraid of having to bear the pain for the next 25 years. But if he knew that the case would be given priority, that daily trials would be held and it would be decided in 25 days, most honest citizens in the country would then have the guts to face up to the situation.

A nation suffers when those who have never learned to obey are given the right to command.

Corrupt politicians forget to pay their taxes and telephone bills. They don't vacate official bungalows even when voted out of power.

Why are those whom we would not trust as guardians of our children, elected as guardians of the nation?

Why has Country First taken up these three issues?

These three issues would make a foundational change to our society, because:

1. This will open the doors for good people to step into decision-making positions.
2. Only good people can take good decisions.
3. Only good decisions, together with good people, shall clean up the system.

If we want to live with honour and see a better India, we need to do three important things:

- Every citizen must become a soldier of the nation, because a soldier is not only willing to sacrifice but is also ready to stop those who try to destroy the nation.

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- If an honest citizen goes to jail unjustifiably, then the entire nation should volunteer to go to jail.
- We need to eradicate the breed of corrupt traitors who are ready to sell the country for their personal gains.

In every success story you find someone who made a courageous decision.

– Peter Drucker

ACTION PLAN

1. Get involved in the mission of Country First immediately.
2. Get into a signature campaign. (Form enclosed)
3. Watch the video carefully. If you are serious, please switch off your cellphone and make sure all others around you have switched off theirs. Please avoid any side-conversations while watching the video as you would miss out on important messages. Please watch the video with an open mind, with an action-oriented attitude to make a positive change in the nation.
4. Show the video of Country First at least once a week within your own community, schools, colleges, offices, factories, organisations like the Rotaries, the Lions, the Junior Chamber, Round Table, Chambers of Commerce, associations, industries or anywhere that you can.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

I, ______________________________, do swear/solemnly affirm that I will be faithful and bear allegiance to India, and will uphold the integrity of India and that I shall carry out my duties loyally and honestly.

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I PROMISE TO MODIFY PERSONAL BEHAVIOUR TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

1. Whenever I see somebody in distress, I will stop and help.
2. I will not give false witness.
3. No matter what I do, I will practise the philosophy of giving more than what I get – at home, at work and socially.
4. I will take pride in whatever I do and eschew the *chalta hai* attitude.
5. I will become a quality conscious, solution-oriented person.
6. I will stop making excuses for non-performance or poor performance.
7. I will not criticise, if I don't want to get involved in a solution-related activity.
8. If I am not doing an honest day's job, I am not earning my salary, but am receiving charity. I shall start earning my salary.
9. I will form the habit of doing the right thing the first time, everytime.
10. I will stop the blame game, accept responsibility and become accountable.
11. I will take initiative and volunteer to accept responsibilities.
12. I will not just work for increments. I will work hard to become promotable.
13. I am proud to be an Indian and shall contribute, in a positive way, to India's name and fame.
14. I will treat others the way I expect to be treated.
15. I will protect public property as a custodian.
16. I will be courteous to fellow citizens.
17. I will be respectful to my elders.
18. I will treat women with respect.

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19. I will not indulge in oppressive and indecent behaviour.

Signature: ________________

Date: ____________________

"Anyone who PROFITS from CRIME is a part of it. No crime is VICTIMLESS."

The victim suffers no doubt, but so does the perpetrator – one physically or economically and the other through the loss of his self-esteem provided his conscience is not dead.

If your mother had cancer, would you let her die? Our motherland is afflicted with the cancer of corruption. What are we waiting for?

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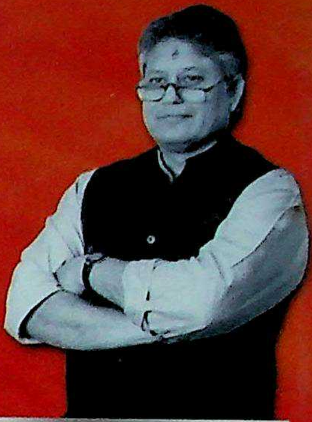

SHIV KHERA is the founder of **Qualified Learning Systems USA**. An educator, business consultant, and a much sought-after speaker.

He has taken his dynamic personal message across the globe, from the US to Singapore. His 25 years of research, understanding and experience has guided several citizens towards the path of personal growth and fulfilment.

He has been recognised as a **'Louis Marchesi Fellow'** by Round Table Foundation, an award given to, among others, **Mother Teresa**. Lions Club International has honoured Shiv Khera with **'Lifetime Achievement Award'** for the cause of **Humanitarian Service to the Society**. Rotary Club has also venerated him with the **'Centennial Vocational Award for Excellence'**.

Shiv Khera's client list includes, among others, **Lufthansa Airlines, Johnson & Johnson Ltd., Motorola, Nestle, Glaxo SmithKline Beecham, Tetrapak, Sanofi Torrent, Gillette and Daimler Chrysler**. He has appeared on numerous radio and television shows.

He is also the author of the International Bestseller ***YOU CAN WIN***, which has sold over **A Million copies** in 8 languages. His second book ***Living With Honour*** is already on the bestseller list. His book, ***Freedom Is Not Free*** has been propelling citizens and our Nation to success.

Over 20,000 people have attended his 3-day dynamic workshops conducted the world over, and approximately **one million** people have heard him as a **Keynote Speaker**.

His Trade Mark is
'Winners don't do different things.
They do things differently.' TM

Shiv Khera is also the founder of **Country First** a Registered Society, whose vision is **'Respect and dignity for every Indian'** and mission is **'to bring freedom through education and justice'**.

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FREEDOM IS NOT FREE

This book is a wake-up call for those whose conscience has gone to sleep, but is not yet dead. It is a call to action for those whose hearts beat and weep for India. It invokes the participation of ordinary citizens so that they take up cudgels for the Nation – a challenge that will put us on the path to prosperity. The author encourages every Indian to take the initiative in bringing glory to India.

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